

ALIENATION IN THE SCHOOLS:

TWO VIEWS:

THE KIBBUTZ AND SUMMERHILL

A Thesis

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by

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"If individualism understands only a part of man, collectivism understands man only as a part.... With the former man's fate is distorted with the latter it is masked. Both views of life are essentially the conclusion or expression of the same human condition only at different stages. Man in a collective is not man with man, that tender surface of personal life which longs for contact with other life is progressively deadened and desensitized. Man's isolation is not overcome here, but overpowered and numbed.... Modern collectivism is the last banner raised by man against a meeting with himself."

Martin Buber

Freedom is - "This will of course mean the end of all alienation."

Sartre

## CHAPTER I:

### THE CONCEPT OF ALIENATION: HOW IT OPERATES WITHIN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Man in the twentieth century is described as estranged from his sensual and emotional self, alienated from the society in which he lives and from his fellow men. Artists, sociologists, writers, poets and musicians have depicted in their art and music and in their writing the conditions, feelings and consequences of alienation. Much of the reform in education is concerned with alienation or manifestations of alienation in the young, in one form or another. As a large percentage of students drop out of school each year and a still larger percentage are rebelling against the situation in which they find themselves, educators have become troubled and confused. The general pattern has been for the educators to deal directly with the manifestations of alienation, delinquency, truancy, dropout and underachievement rather than seeing these manifestations as part of the total human condition, in modern society. There are numerous studies dealing with isolated incidences of alienation, or studies focusing on particularities of alienation. Some of these studies claim the curriculum is irrelevant, it

is too standardized, the subject matter does not deal with the immediate concerns of the students, it does not concern itself with the crucial problems of our age, it is too middle class and therefore irrelevant to at least one third of the students, particularly such groups as the poor and the blacks. Attempts are being made to correct the specific inadequacies; blacks are included in the primary readers and history books (how they are portrayed is another issue), black studies programs are part of the curriculum of major universities, more humanities courses are required so as to rejuvenate a more humane feeling between men. Science and technology are recognized as essential tools for man in order that he can learn to control his environment. While all these innovations constitute an improvement over the present situation, they have still left the students discontented and alienated from themselves and from the society in which they must live as young adults. In dealing with isolated incidences, the researcher has often obscured the central and underlying issues, for he often makes the unwarranted assumption that the existing educational establishment is sound. Thus, if it is intrinsically sound, reform will eliminate the "problems" that arise within the present framework. The fundamental questions are never asked. For example, should education be entirely institutionalized? Is the present structure, the internal



organization of the educational institutions, adequate? What is the rationality of this institution? If these questions are asked their answers might entail a total shift in power and control of the present educational institutions. If, however, the disturbances are treated as abnormalities, the institutions remain intact for the power and policy of the institutions remain essentially as they are. Neither the inner tendencies of the institution nor the organization and value structure of the society at large, which the educational institutions imbibe and disseminate among its students are questioned. The relevant question remains--why and how does the school alienate the young, rather than what are the causes of juvenile delinquency. This is what I will attempt to answer in the first chapter of the thesis. George Von Hilshiemer states, "It can in fact be argued that the school in America is an alienating experience for children of all social classes including the middle class which professionally dominates it."<sup>1</sup>

This is a pointed statement and one wonders what exactly does Hilshiemer mean; for if most middle class parents are asked, they will say that their home life is good and their schools might need improvement but are

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<sup>1</sup>George Von Hilshiemer, "Children, Schools and Utopia." This magazine is about schools. Vol. 2, Issue 2 (August 1966), p. 25.

generally adequate. While critical of their schools, their criticism is not that they feel school is an alienating experience but rather that it does not give enough of the tools necessary to be a "cultured" or "successful adult." They will generally opt for more creativity, more art teachers, and soon. To understand how the school is an alienating experience for all students one must distinguish between two states of alienation. The blacks and some middle class children are subjectively alienated; that is to say that for them, the institution and its cues no longer ring true. These students subjectively feel lonely, frustrated and estranged. They turn to themselves as isolated individuals in an alien world searching for their own cues; they wear long hair, play truant, become delinquent or radicals. This state is a prerequisite for overcoming alienation, for it implies a consciousness of their feelings which could lead to an understanding of why they feel the way they do. The blacks are an example of an alienated group that has achieved consciousness through their alienation. The Negroes remained Negroes as long as they accepted the image the whites had of them--poor, victims of broken homes, culturally deprived. Some valiently strove to make it the white man's way--be good, work hard, look white. Most gave up early in the game. They achieved consciousness when they no longer accepted the white

man's definition and solution to their problem. A solution which gave them sympathy instead of jobs and which served to keep them out of power. They overcame alienation by becoming Blacks, creating their own image, by demanding and imposing their consciousness in their own way upon the white world and by demanding a share of the economic and political power that had been kept for them. The subjective alienation, the feelings of frustration created a consciousness of the reality which gave them their identification and they overcame alienation by becoming Blacks, not Negroes, in a white man's world. The alienated middle class students attempt to overcome alienation by creating their own society or hippie communities. They negate bourgeois standards as hypocritical and destructive, and turn away from this world by creating their own communities. Ultimately they still remained dependent on this bourgeois world which they attempt to escape from. Most middle class kids, however, are objectively alienated, which is another and entirely different matter. That is they have created and are professionally in charge of an institution which they have created. However, the institution, the school has come back to ultimately direct and determine the values and mode of life of the middle class students. Thus it comes to be that they are "happy" as they are getting that which society or the school as the spokesmen of society has



taught them to want, but they have never consciously been able to determine what they actually want. Fromm states

"In our culture, however, education too often results in the elimination of original psychic acts by superimposed feelings, thoughts and wishes.... Modern man lives under the illusion that he knows what he wants while he actually wants what he is supposed to want."

One can now discern two kinds of alienation: Subjective alienation which is a state of mind, a feeling of loneliness, lack of community and estrangement and objective alienation which is a verb and takes its meaning from law, wherein it means to transfer ownership. Objective alienation, the transference of ownership need not necessarily involve the subjective feeling of loneliness or estrangement (witness the happy suburbanite). However, one must know he is alienated and the objective conditions of his alienation before he can achieve consciousness. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Goddat in the introduction To the Writings of the Young Marx state,

"By alienation Marx meant, in general terms that, the projection of human experience in thought or in social institutions are misleadingly separated from man in abstract speculation and acquire a harmful power over him in his social life dividing him from himself and his fellow men."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Fromm, Escape From Freedom.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx, Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, ed. and trans. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Goddat (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1967) p. 11.

Objective alienation is a Marxian concept and it is characterized by a state of being in which the individual is powerless and not in control of his life and the institutions which direct his life.

Marxism and existentialism help us more clearly to understand the specifics of the process of alienation. Marxism shows us how the present economic and social arrangements of civil society must of necessity alienate man from himself, his labor, his fellowmen and the society within which he lives. Marxism explains that man born free, creates institutions which become reified and ironically turn around and make him unfree. For Marx alienation is not an abstract phenomenon but is rooted in the existing arrangements of the society within which the individual lives. Existentialism deals with the mental state of alienation, subjective alienation. It deals with what men can do if God is dead and man is alone in an alien universe. It is concerned with the state of mind of men, when they realize they are strangers in the world. In describing the human condition, Sartre states,

"Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist and man is in consequences forlorn for he cannot find anything to depend upon within or outside himself. He discovers, forthwith that he is without excuse."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Walter Kaufmann, ed. Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: Meridian Books, 1957) p. 295.



Both philosophies have influenced the action and life styles of many groups in our society that are trying to make this society a more humane place to live. Both philosophies stress the dignity of man, his uniqueness, his importance at a time when modern man and his institutions have lost sight of this. Marxism attempts to overcome the alienation contained in the class struggle and in the economic organization of society which ultimately reaches into all of man's interactions by building a new form of society in which his freedom will be realized. His freedom is the end of alienation. Existentialism attempts to specifically resolve man's inner conflict by placing man in command of himself and placing responsibility for his existence squarely on his shoulders. Marxism focuses on man as a social creature, man in society, man as part of a historical process. Existentialism focuses on the struggling individual in an alien world. It is not a social or historical philosophy.

In some ways the philosophies may appear contradictory as one appear highly individualistic and as some would say the last gasp of bourgeois liberalism and the other very communal or group oriented. However, in many ways they supplement each other as Dirk Struik points out in his introduction to the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 by Karl Marx. He states,

"However in laying emphasis on the intense personal side of man existentialism has often touched upon a very important element in man's struggle against alienation. An element which Marxists too often have neglected in a one sided concentration on the economic and political struggle."<sup>5</sup>

This supplementary relationship between the two philosophies was further pointed out in an article by A. Schaff, a philosophy teacher at Warsaw University. This article attempts to explain how existentialism has become so popular in a Marxist country like Poland. Schaff feels that existentialism deals with a whole range of problems and emotions revolving about the meaning of life that Marxism doesn't tackle. He analyzes Sartre's new book which is published only in french "Marxism and Existentialism" and states,

"Sartre emphasizes that his existentialism is only designed to fill the gap that has arisen in Marxism and that once this gap has been filled, existentialism will lose its raison d'etre as an independent philosophical trend."<sup>6</sup>

Wilfrid Desan in The Marxism of Jean Paul Sartre gives an analysis of the continuity of Sartre's thought as he moves toward Marxism and he comes to a similar conclusion as Schaff.

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<sup>5</sup> Karl Marx, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, ed. with intro., Dirk J. Struik, (New York: International Publishers, 1964) p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> Adam Schaff, "Marxism and Existentialism," in Monthly Review, Vol. 141, 1962, p. 106.



For Marx alienation is an objective condition that must exist in the liberal capitalist stage of development, as it is rooted in the very organization and framework of that society. Marx is concerned with the activity of men; man in his daily existence, man in relation to other men, man as he lives eats and suffers. The vital activity which differentiates man from all other creatures are his creative powers. He, man, is the center of the universe. Nature is an extension of man as it is the materials he uses in order to create and objectify himself. The machines, the buildings and the institutions are man (his being) objectified. However under the liberal capitalist society a dichotomy exists between man and his product, man and his institutions and man and nature. As this dichotomy exists man is no longer identical with his product and his institutions. These institutions take on a life of their own and come back to determine his existence. Now man becomes alienated from these institutions. Thus under capitalism labor does not objectify man. As men produce in order to live, their labor does not stem from intrinsic need, from themselves, but rather from a need extraneous to themselves, the need to live. Men are producing in order to live not in order to produce. As man's labor is separated from his product he becomes alienated from himself for he does not objectify himself in his product. His labor is alienated labor as it is

imposed upon him by necessity. The objects of the world are the concretization of his enforced labor a labor imposed upon him by necessity. The objects of the world are the concretization of his enforced or alienated labor. Men are alienated from the world as they are surrounded by a material world which is the concretization of their alienation. Under capitalism man produces so he can acquire something; his motives are egoistic. Someones need has validity not because of the human aspect of the need, but rather because of its commodity aspect. This person's product has value for me because I want to acquire it. I produce in order to acquire what this person has. Another person's demand is valid for me only when they have something for me in return. As a person without goods his demand will remain unsatisfied. Wants are unrelated to needs. All men become a commodity in each others eyes as they are what they produce, that is their value. Human needs are separated out and the exchange value, what I can acquire in exchange for this product is the raison d'etre of the relationship between the two individuals.

"Individuals become so separated and isolated that they establish contact only when they use each other as means to particular ends... bonds between human beings are supplanted by useful associations not of whole persons but of particularized individuals."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Fritz Pappenheim, The Alienation of Modern Man (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1959) p. 81.



Thus Marx contends that man as a social animal, man as he exists in capitalist society is a character of man.

Instead of men together, men are isolated, men atomized and made egoistic. Instead of men in community men are pitted against each other, each man existing in opposition to his fellow man.

As man through alienated labor becomes less of a man, (he depetes himself into his product) depersonalized and alienated from his fellow men (as they are now commodities in his eyes) it becomes easy for him to negate responsibility, create weapons which may demolish him and destroy other men. It is easy to bomb other people for they become merely a city, a commodity of 100,000 that must be destroyed for "democracy." Alienation leads to a society of wolves, each out to get the other; a society of wars and mass killings. Alienation is not the necessary result of technological advance as some critics of society have implied. This is merely an isolation of a specific that disguises the whole. Marx shows that the organization not the technology of society produces the man alienated from himself, his fellow men and his society. Depersonalization need not be the consequences of the machine, a neutral entity. The machine can be, an extension of man, as the airplane is for Saint Exuperiy in Wind Sand and Stars. It is the way man organizes his society that makes his freedom possible and ends his alienation.

Where Marx focuses on the objective conditions of society that produce alienation, Sartre focuses on the mental condition or subjective feeling of alienation; how man who is a stranger in the world can become free and overcome alienation. In moving toward Marxism Sartre uses his basic existential concepts to show how individual action alone cannot overcome alienation and how the individual remains an individual within the group which has become his only means of overcoming alienation. Man is alone in an alien world where he feels powerless and frustrated. This is man's condition. However, man is free. This is the crux of Sartre's position. His freedom is the only definition of man that Sartre will give. If man is free and God is dead then it is he alone that defines himself. That is his life project. He defines himself through commitment, choice and action. He is always free to reverse the direction of his choice. Thus his definition is a personal subjective experience expressed through action in reality. "Thus the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely on his shoulders."<sup>8</sup> By placing man in touch with himself, and by making man ultimately responsible for

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<sup>8</sup>Walter Kaufmann, ed. Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, op. cit., p. 290.



himself, man is bound to the rest of mankind because of the responsibility he bears for the choices he makes. "In fashioning myself I fashion man."<sup>9</sup> When man creates weapons that might result in his own destruction, he is responsible for what he does with these weapons. When alienated he sees no direct relationship between his action and their consequences. Though Sartre would not deny, as some critics claim, the limitation placed upon man's freedom because of his peculiar circumstances and the position of his birth, he ultimately leaves it up to man, man in touch with himself to define those circumstances (which present enumerable definitions). Man makes his choice in consciousness and he is responsible for his choice. Consciousness for Sartre is the consciousness of the isolated individual who chooses according to his experience what he must do. Consciousness for Marx is the consciousness of man as part of a group in society (class or caste) of his objective conditions and its relationship to the material world. It entails an understanding of the relationship between his particular group (blacks, middle class, proletariat, poor) and the rest of society. Though different these are not mutually exclusive. Both however agree, that consciousness is the ability to go beyond the present situation, it is the ability to determine how he

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

will live this situation and what its meaning is to be. Consciousness implies action, the actualization of man in reality. Through action man transcends and shapes his particular situation. He transforms himself and the situation he finds himself in. "Transcendence is in itself freedom and the revolutionary shows by his revolt that he is not a thing but the master of things, not an object but a subject."<sup>10</sup>

However, when the revolt remains an individual act it points up the tragic experience of man, his freedom and his alienation. He is free to act upon the material conditions within which he finds himself, yet he is powerless (in the Marxian sense) as the solitary revolt does not alter the conditions which produced this revolt, the objective conditions. Thus existentialism in dealing with the subjective nature of man can only eliminate alienation up to the point where man needs the power to change his social situation. The rebel, as individual actor, seeks to create a more humane society, a society where he need not be rebel. However, in acting alone he can never create his own emancipation or freedom (the kind of society where he would no longer be rebel). Thus he remains alienated from his society but in touch with himself.

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<sup>10</sup> Wilfrid Desan, The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sarte (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1966) p. 14.



Sartre turns to Marxism in order to solve the dilemma of the rebel. Desan analyzes Sartre's Dialectical Materialism in his book The Marxism of Jean Paul Sartre. Here, according to Desan, Sartre extends his definition of freedom and becomes concerned with man's effectiveness on his environment. To be effective (which means to have an effect on the environment) man can no longer exist in isolation but must combine his energies with like minded men and in unity attempt to transform the surroundings. As freedom now includes the ability to effectively transform your surroundings the formation of the group offers the possibility of effectively actualizing consciousness and through action extending the consciousness of the group. As a new situation is created a new consciousness develops. The relationship of the individual to the group is described by Desan "Each act can be said to be a free individual development yet, it is such only through the group. The group alone makes the act sufficient and is instrumental in its success."<sup>11</sup> Freedom demands group activity. In practice the necessity of the group in order to create is obvious e.g. The creation of the kibbutz and a new social order could only have come about through the formation of the group. Another example of the necessity

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<sup>11</sup>Wilfred Desan, The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre, op. cit., p. 135.

of the group in creating change can be seen in the resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto. The Jews of Russia, Poland, Germany and France were impotent for about five years and they were slowly killed off. This situation changed only after the Warsaw Ghetto became unified in 1944 in their desire to defeat the Nazis. The Jews for the first time were able to take positive action against their situation only as a group. As isolated individuals they were ineffectual and impotent. The individuals of the group chose to become a group and the freedom of the individual remained because "We are brethren not because of a received similarity of nature like peas in a can but because we are sons of our own common free choice."<sup>12</sup> Unity comes from free choice and Sartre always keeps the subjective side of man in the fore. The group however, has two possibilities; it can be the source of freedom for the individual, or it can become the source of his ultimate oppression and alienation. Often when the group becomes institutionalized; its values become reified and the group does become a force of oppression. However, it is only man, as individual, within the group, that can attain freedom in its broadest sense, to realize oneself in all one's possibilities as well as to effectively control one's environment.

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<sup>12</sup>Wilfrid Desan, The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre, op. cit., p. 141.

In examining objective and subjective alienation and ways to overcome alienation in the society at large, perhaps we can more clearly understand how the schools as an institution of society alienates the child from himself and from that society. In examining alienation as it exists in our schools perhaps we will be able to pinpoint the actions we must take to eliminate alienation.

Firstly our schools have become reified and abstract as opposed to a working human institution. In a working human institution (in the Marxian sense as discussed earlier) there is no dichotomy between the members and the institution. This means the members are the institution or the institution is the objectification of its members. This means that the institution, the school, is not an abstract entity but is operated, directed and controlled by its members; the teachers, students, the principle, and perhaps the parent. It means that only these members determine the rationality of their institution. As they are the institution they are in the best position to determine what their needs are and how the interest of the whole can best be met. In our society however, there is a dichotomy between the members of the institution and the institution itself. Take the school as an example, here, its rationality, why it exists, what it shall exist for, is determined outside the community of students and teachers that comprise it. It is determined by the social



and economic organization of the society within which the school exists. The social and economic organization of the society demands certain products for its maintenance and the school is directed by these demands. A Hierarchy is created, the society demands certain school products, the school fulfills these demands and the individual must fulfill the demands made by the school. The individual is lowest in the hierarchy. He is alienated from his institution as he no longer shapes or controls it. He as student and teacher, is forced into accepting externally placed demands. The society determines the form of education but the relevant question is what in society and who in society shapes the school? If we accept the Marxian definition of society and I will attempt to show why it is relevant today, we can say that society is the social and economic interactions of men in their daily economic pursuits. Marx describes society

"in the social production of their life men enter into definite relations that are indissoluble and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. This is the economic structure of society, the real foundations on which there rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Eric Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Company 1961) p. 17.

Within the social and economic relationships of society a particular group (caste or class) maintain power (that is actually control the wealth and influence, the economy, the politics, the culture and the military. This group is the dominant group, (the aristocracy, the mass, the bourgeoisie) the group that sets the standards. Its values are those which will maintain its image of itself and project this to the rest of society. It attempts to keep society as it is so that it can maintain its position. Its standards and its values are the dominant ideology. The dominant ideology is the attempt to rationally explain the productive and social relationships in a particular period by a particular group of that period. It is only a partial explanation of the complex reality as the ruling group is so interest bound it can no longer see those concepts which would undermine its position. The ideology of the ruling group makes it difficult to see the inherent contradictions of the system while it secures the consent of the oppressed to maintain that system. Thus E. Z. Friedenberg points out,

"when a society becomes more democratic and no longer feels comfortable about treating people as victims, yet still retains the same exploitive social arrangements then it has to create institutions that will insure people to chose to be victims."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Edgar Z. Friedenberg, "What the Schools Do," This magazine is about schools, Vol. III, Issue 1 (Winter 1969) p. 35.



Ideology as an abstraction becomes man's consciousness projected outside itself and therefore alienated from itself in the form of a set of predetermined absolutes that have been created by the dominant group. Henri Lefebvre gives an excellent example of ideology

The middle class elaborated an image of itself for its own use. As bearer of human reason in history, uniquely endowed with good capacity and honorable intentions, finally as alone possessed with capacity for efficient organization. It had its own image of other classes, the good worker, the bad worker, the agitator, the rabble rouser. Lastly it puts forward a self image for the use of other classes, how its money serves the general good, promotes happiness. How the middle class organization of society promotes population growth and material progress.<sup>15</sup>

These values become reified as they take on an existence of their own and are often times not applicable to the material conditions of the changing reality. This was particularly true not only of our culture but of the kibbutz as we shall see later on. These values are no longer determined by man through their own experiences but come back to determine him. Through an alienated conscience which means man has transferred ownership of his conscience to the ideology, man is directed from an outside source and does not create his own values or his own actions. As the cohesive factor of the society, ideology

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<sup>15</sup> Henri Lefebvre, The Sociology of Marx, trans., Norbert Guterman (New York: Random House, 1968) p. 76.

attempts to maintain the society as it exists. Of ideology Lefebvre states,

"They refract rather than reflect reality via preexisting representations selected by the dominant group and acceptable to them. Old problems, old points of view, old vocabularies, traditional modes of expression thus come back to stand in the way of the new elements in society and new approaches to its problems."<sup>16</sup>

The school through its curriculum, philosophy and its psychological concepts is the institutionalization of the dominant ideology. Thus the school as an institution is not controlled by the members of the institution but rather by the dominant group through its ideology. Thus the traditional image of the school as an intellectual community questioning the surrounding society in the tempo of the socratic dialogue, is an impossibility under present educational system. The consequences are a student body that is powerless and frustrated.

A second consequence of the school being directed by the dominant ideology and manipulated by the people in powerful positions, is that

"Appointment of teachers and other decisions effecting the functioning of the schools do not grow out of a genuine concern for the children but result from the pressure and manipulation on the part of influential politicians."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>17</sup> Fritz Pappenheim, The Alienation of Modern Man, op. cit., p. 125.



The teachers and principles are influenced by this pressure as they are economically dependent on the community in which they teach and its politicians. They form the teaching establishment. The teaching establishment and its political relationship help maintain the status quo and prevent the shift in power. E. g. The National Education Association is the professional teacher organization which sets the standards and policy of the educational establishment. Its members are the teachers of the school system. Its board consists of those members that are most successful in the established way of the school. These members control the accreditation board that determined on a state level what the universities shall teach in order for its graduates to be accredited teachers in the state system. Thus, all educational criticism is channelled within these prescribed courses and the educational establishment through rigid professional standards preclude so called nonprofessionals that might be talented or have different ideas, from entering the profession.

"Any potential differences as to what the certification rules should be with few notable exceptions, public concern over teacher certification, to the extent that it exists at all finds expression through the grooves of influence that have been carefully channelled by the educational establishment."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>James Conant, The Education of American Teachers (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963) p. 29.



Through this hierarchy the educational establishment remains alien to the people they are educating as the need of these students are extrinsically determined rather than intrinsically determined.

Jules Henry in Culture Against Man shows how the experts along with the teachers and politicians direct the thinking and solving of a problem by the way they define the problem. Henry calls these experts Cultural Maximizers as they "maintain or push further the cultures greatness and integration."<sup>19</sup> These experts derive their success from the present organization of the society and therefore their stake in the present society means they want to maintain that present organization. Because of their present position within the social structure, their viewpoint and their research will necessarily sophisticatedly adopt the ideology to accommodate potentially disruptive situations. In education we can see how the experts objectively alienate the poor and the blacks by defining their situation in terms of cultural deprivation. This conceals the real nature of the poor as it offers them sympathy rather than jobs or power. It makes it harder for the poor to see the real nature of their problem. It implies that with a little help (reading experts,

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<sup>19</sup>Jules Henry, Culture Against Man (New York: Vintage, 1963) p. 31.

enrichment teachers) these unfortunate youngsters can make it. However the real nature of, the conflict is between rich and poor. Friedenbergr states,

"By defining the difference between rich and poor not in terms of their relationship to the means of production and the consequent conflict of real interests but rather in terms of cultural deprivation it holds up the illusion of possible success."<sup>20</sup>

However the objective conditions contradict the myth created by the experts. Blacks were led to believe college and high school diplomas would get them better jobs, get them out of the slums. However studies have shown black college graduates do little if at all better than white high school graduates and black high school graduates do little if at all better than white dropouts. As Friedenbergr sums up the real position of the poor when he states, "no schools can be magical. There will be some things you don't understand.... You have been permanently deprived of something that is of inestimable value."<sup>21</sup> Thus the experts through ideology alienate the poor from themselves and from the consciousness which would help them understand the objective conditions of their society.

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<sup>20</sup>E. Z. Friedenbergr, "What the Schools Do." This magazine is about schools. Vol. III, Issue 1 (Winter, 1969) p. 35.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

The dominant ideology as it is implemented in the schools renders the student powerless, alienated from himself and his school. The next question is what are some of the characteristics of twentieth century American Technocracy that have become part of the American ideology and how do they become part of the classroom situation? Jules Henry in Culture Against Man describes how our technological society demands specific personality traits that will insure the perpetuation, the expansion and the "progress of our technological society. Henry terms these traits "Technological drivenness" they involve competitiveness (termed individuality) efficient functioning (like capital which is expected to function efficiently in business). A concept of progress (which means the constant push forward toward a higher standard of living) and fear of failure which impells people to perform as they are requested to perform). In this technocracy the men are alienated, in the very Marxian sense described earlier, from their labor, their society and themselves hence the title of the book Culture Against Man. Men in this society compensate for this alienation or inhuman existence by accumulating goods and by a frantic search for fun during the leisure hours. The school as it mirrors a society which is alienating proceeds to alienate the child from himself and his work. The school creates the kind of relationships that persistently reinforce the traits that



society demands. Henry describes various phraseology classroom techniques curriculum organization that actively reinforce these competitive achievement drives, desire to please and the need for approval. John Holt in Why Children Fail also describes classroom learning situations that teach the appropriate strategy in order that the child succeed in terms of that particular teacher and that particular school but will ultimately fail himself. In a Columbus public school I saw how the character traits desired by the technocracy become part of the classroom strategy. A teacher during a reading lesson will play a word game. She says lets see if David can fool you (the group) David goes to the board and arranges four cards to make a sentence. Charles is asked to read the sentence and makes an error. David has fooled Charles. Who else can he fool? Alice reads the sentence correctly. She was not fooled. The entire experience here is reduced to a competitive bout where the object of the bout is to out-smart your fellow students. The intrinsic value of language, what it is all about is lost sight of. Henry states,

"Actually culture invades and infests the mind as an obsession. If it does not culture will not work for only an obsession has the power to withstand the impact of critical differences, to fly in the face of contradiction; to engulf the mind so that it will see the world only as the culture decrees that it shall be seen, to compel a person to be absurd. The central emotion is fear of failure. In order not to

fail most students are willing to belong to anything and to care not whether what they are told is true or false."<sup>22</sup>

In the school the experts determine the curriculum. They decide what is the relevant vocabulary and story material for six year olds, what scientific and historical material should be mastered and the objective tests measure how much of this knowledge he has accumulated. The learning does not stem from intrinsic needs, from the needs of the student themselves but rather from a need extraneous to themselves, the desire for success. In this situation the relationship between knowledge and the student is similar to the relationship between man and his labor. It is egoistic in that man produces in order to accumulate more goods. The student learns (accumulates facts) in order to accumulate more A's, amass more degrees, which leads to better jobs and more money and ultimately the accumulation of more goods. Ultimately, the school operates on the same principles as the society and is just as acquisitive and alienating as the society within which it operates. In the school students become commodities as they are not Johnny or Mary but A student or B students. Notice how students are referred to as college material or commercial material. Friedenberg states,

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<sup>22</sup>Jules Henry, Culture Against Man, op. cit., p. 297.



"What I mean is that the school by providing a continual substrate, a kind which is in effect a character of the society makes the society seem so natural, that you don't even notice the awful things it does."<sup>23</sup>

In our schools knowledge does not help children make sense of their reality or answer their questions about life. Exams, achievement tests, grades propert to measure real learning but in reality measure those talents and achievements which the system values. The norm, categorizes the child who is further alienated from himself as he is placed in predetermined categories his direction is chosen for him by an abstraction rather than by himself. In the socratic conception of learning man is his knowledge. There is no dichotomy between knower and that which is known. The same would hold true of a Marxian conception of knowledge for knowledge would not exist as an abstract category but only as an extension of man. Knowing changes your perception, your actions and your life style. You are your knowledge "knowledge should be appropriated, should be useful but only as it serves to emancipate the individual and assists him in discovering his internal attitudes, his degree of consciousness."<sup>24</sup> When you become your knowledge you become part of a historical

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<sup>23</sup>Edgar Z. Friedenberq, "What the Schools Do." This magazine is about schools. Vol. III, Issue 2 (Winter, 1969) p. 33.

<sup>24</sup>George F. Kneller, Existentialism and Education, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.) p. 124.

process that has produced this knowledge. You become more of yourself and more of the humanity from which you derived this knowledge. The search for knowledge in the Socratic sense does not exist as children cannot ask their own questions. The curriculum must be acceptable it must produce men that society needs. It must develop the image society has of itself in its students, therefore Eldridge Cleaver would never adorn the main lobby of P.S. 29.

As a result of the objective state of their alienation, their transfer of ownership to the ideology and the school the student is powerless and apathetic. Those students go on to a society from which they are alienated but which offers them material rewards to compensate for this alienation. A percentage of these students become aware of the objective conditions of their school and the society within which they must grow up. For these students the cues of the school, no longer ring true. These students are subjectively alienated. They are lonely frustrated or estranged. For some, the blacks and the poor the promise of better jobs that the institution extends to them, they know are not true. The institution is against their interests, their culture, their way of life. For others, the middle class whites, the "good life" doesn't make sense to them. Goodman describes the tone of these students when he states, "Is the harmonious organization to which the young are inadequately



socialized perhaps against human nature or not worthy of human nature and therefore there is difficulty growing up."<sup>25</sup> These students have not transferred ownership of their life and attempt to remain in contact with themselves. Some of these become delinquents and truants. They are hostile to a society that they feel is denying them what it has advertised as the good life. Others, like the hippies and radicals see the system as "absurd." In terms of these youngsters, the schools are unsuccessful.

"The early schooling process is not successful unless it has accomplished in the child an acquiescence in its criteria, unless the child wants to think the way the school has taught him to think. He must accept alienation as a rule of life."<sup>26</sup>

The child in our school is placed in a peculiar dilemma. If he is critical and sensitive, if he refuses to accept the inadequate standards of the teacher in music or read Dick and Jane because the stories are absurd and boring he will fail. If he is gentle and will not compete he is doomed to fail. If he will not participate in extracurricular activities such as baseball or basketball rallies, if he refuses to have fun he is doomed to social isolation which in turn dooms him to ridicule. The child can either acquiesce, at a price, or rebel and remain in touch with

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Goodman, Growing Up Absurd (New York: Vintage Books, 1960) p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Jules Henry, Culture Against Man, op. cit., p. 297.



himself. However even as rebel he is placed in a peculiar situation for he is often not allowed to assume responsibility for his action and his position is not given credence. He becomes a problem to be solved and is sent to the psychiatrist. In these situations the school refuses to allow the child to experience himself. His experiences are negated, they do not count. However if we look at the Sartrean position on alienation we see that this experience is precisely what man is. It is he alone that can give meaning to this experience. This experience is his only guide. It is humanness. The schools take this away from him by taking his experience and molding it to their liking it is this that alienates the student from himself and his essential humanness. What the child really wants to know is who am I? He wants someone to confront him as a person directly. The schools call him David Tager, A student 125 I.Q. potential college material possible lawyer or doctor. He wants to define himself through his relationships and his work but he can do neither. He must of necessity become the long haired rebel. Perhaps it is as Friedenberg contends, the rebel is actually more in touch with himself and reality than the other students. He has taken or tried to take his responsibility in the Sartrean sense seriously. He has tried to transcend his situation and overcome his alienation. He is more in touch with his authentic self and in his honesty and need

to preserve himself he rebels and defies the system that demands his distortion. For fear of the consequences most children accept the standards of the school. The result is a child alien from himself. He does not know how he feels or what he thinks as he is afraid to think his own thoughts. As he loses the ability to trust himself he relies more and more on external clues as to how to think, how to act and what to want. He becomes easy to be manipulated and ultimately an easy prey for totalitarianism where his goals directions and thoughts are totally controlled for him. Thus the child that acquiesces, the child our system comends as being good, is the potentially dangerous adult.

The creative child can visualize alternatives and on the basis of these alternatives can formulate a critical appraisal of the actual. He can visualize the possibility of change and is therefore a challenge to the accepted values as he demands a radically different social and economic arrangement. The school and the society are threatened by the creative individual. The school is threatened by the individual that thinks new thoughts and has existentially taken responsibility for his position. The creative student does not usually correspond to the image of creativity that our schools and educators foster. It need not necessarily be the student who paints well designs the stage set or plays in the band. It often



simply means sensitivity, ability to feel deeply, ability to critically appraise the situation one finds oneself in and the ability to formulate new ideas on this basis. It is this kind of individual the schools will have difficulty in accepting; as they can and often do constitute a serious challenge to the schools. When the schools merely attempt to manipulate and harness the energies of the students to the system they are avoiding the real problem. These energies are often only temporarily curtailed. The underlying restlessness remains only to erupt at some later or more opportune moment. Only through creating a school system where real freedom exists and the rebel need not be rebel can the schools solve this dilemma. Jules Henry states,

"Finally I argue that creativity is the last thing wanted in any culture because of its potentialities for disruptive thinking, that the primordial dilemma of all education derives from the necessity of training the mighty brain of homosapiens to be stupid and that creativity when it is encouraged (as in science in our culture) occurs only after the creative thrust of an idea has been tamed and directed toward social approved ends. In this sense creativity can become the most obvious conformity."<sup>27</sup>

More more individuals have become aware of the problem of alienation. Recently there has been a host of books, some by educators such as John Holt and Johnathan Kozal others by professional writers as George Dennison

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<sup>27</sup>Jules Henry, Culture Against Man, op. cit., p. 288.



of the First Street School in New York on new approach. Many individuals are attempting to change the objective conditions of the public school by setting up small community schools run by parents, teachers and students. Others are attempting to redefine the concept of education and are opting for shorter years in school and a period of apprenticeship between the ages of 14 and 18 where the child can experiment with different types of jobs. In these small experimental schools that have begun springing up all over the country (of which Everdale Place just outside of Toronto is the most famous) there is no set curriculum or predetermined units of study the children determine what they will learn and when they will learn. There is a good deal of exploration of the surrounding community by small groups of students and there are no grades or exams. People from the community participate a great deal by showing slides, playing music, sculpting helping with poetry writing. There is an emphasis on a direct and personal relationship between student and teacher. The teacher is very often not a professional educator though she often holds a degree from a university. Her role is not to guide or be a model but to simply be an individual doing her own thing in the classroom. The information on these schools is scarce as they are very new, small and without the usual curriculum guides and lists of proposals. Therefore in attempting to further

analyze the specifics of alienation, consciousness and freedom I have chosen to do a detailed study of two older and more established schools. These two schools were chosen as they offer radically different approaches to the problem of alienation. The schools chosen are the Kibbutz school in Israel and the Summerhill school in England. Both these attempts are radically different from what we do in our public schools and that is basically why they have been chosen. One attempts to solve the problem of alienation through communal child rearing and collective living, the other through a highly individualistic, laissez faire approach. Both offer information to the problem of alienation and both present difficulties which are peculiar to their particular conception of education. It is hoped that by doing a detailed analysis of the two educational systems it will shed light on the problems of alienation that are encountered when educating the young in twentieth century American Society.

## CHAPTER II:

### SUMMERHILL: AN INDIVIDUALISTIC ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH ALIENATION

Summerhill is a school of about forty-five children in Lieston, Suffolk, England. It is coeducational and it draws its students from the middle class of Holland, Germany, Scandinavia, America and England. Children may enter the school anywhere from age five to age fifteen and leave the school at age sixteen. The children are housed according to age groups; five-seven year olds, eight-ten year olds, eleven-fifteen year olds. Each age group has a house mother and the children sleep three to four in a room. Its founder A. S. Neill describes Summerhill as a radical approach to child rearing and education; a reaction to an education that produces the "mass minded man," the man that seeks his direction from without, the man alienated from himself and his fellow men. Neill attempts to individuate man, to create a man who seeks his direction from within, the man in touch with himself.

Neill focuses on the individual and attempts to create an environment where the child's education will enable him to answer the existential questions; who am I? What is my existence about? As these are personal



questions their answers require a personal response. This requires authenticity and an intimacy with oneself and one's feelings. Only when the child knows and understands his feelings, when he is free to express these feelings will the individual react authentically, as himself and not in a proscribed manner. To be authentic and know oneself the child must be able to experiment with his feelings and with various life styles. This freedom to experiment means the absence of all authority, be it overt authority (Direct and explicit in its demands and sanctions). Or anonymous authority (which pretends that all is done with the consent of the individual but which forces this consent through psychic manipulation; the withdrawal of love or feeling outside the mainstream through disapproval). The result of both kinds of authority (the second being the most prevalent in the twentieth century bureaucratic and progressive society) is that the individual fears the nameless other fears being unacceptable or rejected by him or he fears direct punishment. In either case fear makes the individual hostile and hypocritical. As a result Neill attempts to do away with all authority believing that in the absence of fear the child will experiment with different life styles and become intimate with himself. The child who is free of hostility and can be intimate with himself will openly be able to love others and embrace life. Summerhill is Neill's solution to a society

where man is alienated from himself, his fellow man and from his society. It is a direct response to the modern mass technological society of the twentieth century. It is Neill's attempt to save society, Neill believes political solutions have never worked as they generally breed hate which produces the ills of society. The socialist turns his hate toward the rich but love which is the potential savior of man remains outside the political. Thus he states,

"The future of Summerhill may be of little import but the future of the Summerhill idea is of the greatest importance to humanity. New generations must be given the chance to grow in freedom. The bestowal of love and only love can save the world."<sup>1</sup>

Summerhill concentrates all its efforts on creating a free atmosphere in an unstructured school where the child remains in touch with his experiences. The child who has lived out his emotional conflict rather than repressed them is the free child. The free child grows into the conscious adult, the adult who is able to find interest and fulfillment in life. Neill states,

"You cannot train a person to have a strong will. If you educate children in freedom they will be more conscious of themselves for freedom allows more and more of the unconscious to become conscious. That is why most Summerhill

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<sup>1</sup>A. S. Neill, Summerhill (A Radical Approach to Child Rearing) New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1960) p. 92.

children have few doubts about life. They know what they want."<sup>2</sup>

Consciousness for Neill is an individual experience psychological in origin. Consciousness occurs when the psychological stages of the child are lived through, expressed and not repressed. The free child trusts his feelings and cannot be easily led. He believes in himself as his experiences are his own. He defines himself through these experiences and through the direct confrontation with his peers and his teachers. He acts through trust in his own human worth rather than through fear. The fear of disapproval and failure which is such an integral part of our school system is nonexistent at Summerhill. Neill's educational philosophy has implications for society and as a social philosophy it raises questions concerning the present economic and social arrangements of our society. Later we will discuss more fully these implications. However the basic assumptions of his analysis concerning the child and his needs raises certain questions which Neill never really considers. To what extent are the child's feelings and needs as revealed at Summerhill the result of the particular social and economic arrangements? Perhaps the school in freeing the child does remove some of the restraints placed on the child by fearful adults but are

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 349.



not those feelings that Summerhill releases a product of the bourgeois society. Does the child's perception of reality the way he makes sense of his world differ from the traditional liberal world view? Underlying Neill's educational philosophy is the assumption that there is a basic natural man which society has distorted. Neill's concept of freeing the child comes out of traditional Freudian psychology which was quite popular in the twenties particularly in the new experimental progressive schools in the United States. However, much of Freudian psychology is the heir of the bourgeois liberal tradition as its entire structure rests on man within this bourgeois society. Mannheim shows this very clearly when he states,

"But all that still appears to us in the first phases of psychoanalysis is a product of the approach characteristic of the liberal individualistic epoch, the typical isolation of the individual when diagnosed, the obscuring of social interdependence and the oversimplification of the individuals relationship to his environment."<sup>3</sup>

Neill sees the child as egoistic, "We cannot get away from the fact that a child is primarily an egoist. No one matters. When the ego is satisfied, we have what we call goodness, when the ego is starved we have what we call criminality."<sup>4</sup> The role of the teacher is to see where the child is at and help him through the phases of ego

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<sup>3</sup>Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, p. 227.

<sup>4</sup>A. S. Neill, Summerhill, op. cit., p. 273.

growth. The school provides the physical setting where the child can live out his particular conflicts without fear of moral sanctions. Here the child is allowed to express his needs, his conflicts, his fears his aggressions, his anger, his hostility. The child is free to experiment with his life, his emotions, his actions, his being. He is free to be dirty and unkempt, to attend classes or to never attend classes, to climb trees all day or play all day or sleep all day, to clean his room or to leave it messy. Freedom at Summerhill is defined as "Doing what you like so long as you don't interfere with the freedom of others."<sup>5</sup> All interference with the freedom of others is handled by the school council which meets every Saturday night and metes out penalties, usually in the form of fines, to those who transgress the rules which the council has formulated. The distinguishing feature of Summerhill is the real experimentation the child can have with his emotions and his life. Summerhill renounces all direction, all suggestion, all moral training, all religious instruction and all exams, grading and grouping. In the morning the weekly Schedule is posted on the board for each of the three age divisions. The children attend only those classes they want to attend. If their attendance becomes sporadic and therefore slows up the group the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 114.



child must then either attend regularly or drop out. The children do not pass or fail or move from grade to grade. They each determine which things they wish to learn and find the class at their approximate level. The school does not (as other schools and educators claim) know what is good and necessary for children. It allows the children to determine this for themselves and this implies a belief in the inherent goodness of the child. Neill states, "The function of the child, is to live his own life, not the life that his anxious parents think he should nor a life according to the purpose of the educator who thinks he knows what is best."<sup>6</sup> The child is a self determined being that can and should learn when he wants to. He is left alone and is responsible for himself. It is this responsibility and choice which creates a rich inner life as he must rely on himself to answer all his existential questions. He is always free to reverse the direction of his choice and each choice further defines him. Children who have lived out their egoistic stage are able as adults to face the realities of life without the unconscious longing for the play of childhood. As there are no moral restraints, no tabboos, no standards of behavior the children have no necessity "to live a life that is a lie."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 20.



The experimentation of childhood leads to a creative life style which reflects the individuals way of viewing the world. Neill describes how children free from the external pressures of success, money, glory or admiration can determine their own vocations on the basis of their own interests. Children not interested in academic subjects were able to acquire the needed mathematical and reading skills within one to two years (as opposed to ten years in the regular schools) in order that they pass required college exams or in order to learn a trade such as tool making. In their vocations many of these graduates were described as interested, creative and enthusiastic. Neill describes the resultant graduate as a conscious free being unafraid to encounter the world.

Summerhill attempts to resolve the conflict that exists within every social order, the conflict between the institutions of the society and the needs, impulses and dictates of the child which these institutions attempt to control. Goodman states this dilemma in his article in the New York Review of Books,

"If we set up a structure that strictly channels energy, directs attention, regulates movement (which are "good things") we may temporarily inhibit impulses, wishing, daydreaming and randomness (which are bad things) but we also thereby jeopardize initiative intrinsic

motivation, imagination, invention, self-reliance, freedom from inhibition and finally even health."<sup>8</sup>

Summerhill's solution is to delay the socialization process till sixteen years of age when the young adult having satisfied his egoistic demands will be able to accept the impositions of society. Neill states, "No one can have social freedom for the rights of others must be respected but everyone should have individual freedom."<sup>9</sup> The kibbutz as the direct antithesis of Summerhill begins the socialization process at birth. In the next chapter we will explore the implications of this for the child. Neill criticizes the kibbutz for its heavy emphasis on work, he states, "To me the Israeli method is sacrificing young life to economic needs. It may be necessary but I would not dare call that system ideal community living."<sup>10</sup> To a large extent Neill's view of work reflects the traditional dichotomy between work and play characteristic of our liberal technocracy. This attitude is reflected in the basic philosophy and organization of the school. However one wonders if Neill's philosophy does not omit certain considerations; witness the pride of the Indian

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Goodman, The Present Moment in Education. New York Review of Books (New York: A Whitney Ellsworth, April 10, 1969) Vol. XII, No. 7, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> A. S. Neill, Summerhill, op. cit., p. 356.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 65.



boy hunting with his father and the pride of the kibbutz child in their children's society. Does Neill's position reflect a lack of a sense of community which is characteristic of the kibbutz and the indian communities and which is reflected in their attitude toward work?

The power struggle and the consequent rebellion by youth is eliminated at Summerhill because of the absence of authority. The students direct their own lives and therefore there is no one to rebel against. The anti-social acts that occur at Summerhill are a reaction against the authority that the child has brought with him from his previous school experience or his home. Because his acting out is not threatening to the school it is not a "problem." Thus the problem child can be responded to with directness and authenticity. The child is not socially engineered into the appropriate channels in order to avoid "trouble" he is instead helped in terms of his own specific needs. In both Summerhill and the kibbutz the same adolescent activities is not a problem because these societies do not fear adolescent rebellion. In our society much of the same activities become problematic because of the challenge the adolescent presents to the adult world. As Neill sees the Summerhill idea as a solution to societies problems, it seems relevant to speculate on what a society of Summerhill graduates would be like. A system of Summerhill schools would ultimately



demand the revision of the social and economic structure of society. Its graduates would be unwilling to compete for the rewards of prestige and material gain that are the only rewards our society can offer to the laborer who is alienated from his labor. The adults who seek only inner satisfaction would drop out of the labor market and society would begin collapsing as its value structure would be put on the line and questioned. One wonders if a society of young adult Summerhill graduates would not resemble the hippie communities of today. Would it not consist of the individuals who reject the surrounding adult world and find its only alternative is to drop out and create its own community. As the hippie communities do not join the adult world they eternally remain youth with all its problems and inadequacies as well as its strength. Perhaps the shortcomings of the hippie communities are the inadequacies of a Summerhillian philosophy of education.

Goodman in the New York Review of books states,

"Summerhills affectionate family of autonomous persons is a model for all pads, communities and tribes. The sexual freedom exists that Neill approved but could not legally sanction careless dress has become the common uniform."<sup>11</sup>

If as Paul Goodman and Jules Henry contend, the youth of today do not wish to grow up because they refuse to enter an inhuman society with phoney values, Summerhill

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<sup>11</sup>Paul Goodman, The Present Moment in Education, p. 18.

does not really provide an alternative community with an adult culture and value structure that would foster a positive relationship between the individual and the community as the kibbutz does. The relationship between the pupils and the teachers are hardly mentioned in Neill's discussion of the school and therefore I must assume they are relatively unimportant in the schools functioning. Neill is the only adult that seems to have a direct relationship with his students. In place of a real Community within which the young may grow up, Summerhill through the isolation of the youth creates a substitute community where the youth of middle class background develop a sub-culture of their own. As the youth is segregated from an ongoing community, it develops its own value structure. These values are developed in isolation and are often in opposition to the values of the surrounding adult world. In this way youth is in a similar situation as the hippie community of today, for in both cases there is no positive relationship between themselves and the rest of society. The school, as the hippie community, remains isolated from reality, from real contact with a real community of adults and children of all kinds of background. Therefore, the youth have no knowledge of the struggles and difficulties of the outside world as they become absorbed in creative self-expression. This further isolates them from each other and the outside community. Self-expression and



individual freedom is juxtaposed to a surrounding "other directed society" and the concept of creativity remains very limited. It remains confined to dress, manner and room decoration. It remains private. It ultimately becomes absorbed by the entire youth culture and loses its vitality. The distorted version as it appears in the mass pop culture is bereft of its original significance and ultimately serves to buttress the established way as the establishment appears benevolent and kind in allowing and sanctioning all this freedom. It also serves to transfer the focus of the individual away from the real issues; power and control. These hippies have no real power to control the vital content of their lives, the schools their children go to, the kinds of future their children will face, the kinds of economic attitudes and satisfactions they will get is still determined for them. The young of Summerhill remain alienated from the surrounding society even though they are in touch with their feelings. He maintains no real relationship with the surrounding community as he does his thing in isolation. The young adult graduate of Summerhill is described by Goodman,

"The likelihood is that A. S. Neill's hope will be badly realized. It is not hard to envisage a society in the near future in which self-reliant and happy people will be attendants of a technological apparatus over which they have



no control whatever and whose purposes do not seem to them of their business."<sup>12</sup>

Neill describes with satisfaction such success stories among his graduates. The Summerhill graduates will produce a whole culture alienated from their environment because they do not care about it.

Summerhill does not have an adult culture or a real community within which the child can situate himself nor does it create an environment which relates or reflects the history, literature or heritage of man; his struggles, his endeavors, his human encounters and his destructiveness, his emotional range, his problems, his love or his hate. It does not create an environment within which youth can situate themselves emotionally, historically or culturally. It does not tie youth to the ongoing struggles of history of which he as a fragmentary part must actively participate in. Being unsituated in time creates a youth that can only visualize the immediacy and presentness of the situation. His structuring of his reality is always limited because of his focus on presentness. It limits the alternatives available to him. He is isolated from his past and is forced to create his own values in isolation. This removes him all the more from the humanity which he is apart of. This further alienates him as

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<sup>12</sup>Paul Goodman, The Present Moment in Education, op. cit., p. 18.

he is drawn outside the community and he is drawn inward. Neill sloughs off in a few paragraphs much of human experience as he states, "Books are the least important apparatus in a school. All that any child needs is the three r's, the rest should be tools and clay and sports and theater and paint and freedom."<sup>13</sup> One wonders if he doesn't come out pretentious in demanding the child to recreate the values that men have spent five thousand years creating? Mannheim describes this position very well when he states,

"The fiction of the isolated and self-sufficient individual underlies in various forms the individualistic epistemology and genetic psychology. Epistemology operated with the isolated self-sufficient individual as if from the very first he possessed in essence all the capacities characteristic of human beings including that of pure knowledge as if he produced his knowledge of the world from within himself alone."<sup>14</sup>

Neill's challenge to the conventional school is well taken

"It is time that we are challenging the school's notion of work. It is taken for granted that every child should learn math, history, geography, some science, a little art and certainly literature. It is time that we realized that the average young child is not much interested in any of these subjects."<sup>15</sup>

However his dogmatic rejection of the conventional learning techniques leaves him totally unable to see the

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<sup>13</sup>A. S. Neill, Summerhill, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>14</sup>Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>15</sup>A. S. Neill, Summerhill, op. cit., p. 26.



connection between learning and creativity. He claims that when a new pupil enters the school and is given the freedom to attend or not to attend classes the new pupil opts for no classes. This constitutes the basis for the anti-intellectual attitude at Summerhill. However he fails to mention the rote drill which characterized all previous learning experiences and which is probably the reason the child rejects all learning. Intellectual activity is generally referred to by Neill as boring or dull. It would seem that if the headmaster could find no joy in intellectuality it would be highly unlikely that any of his students would. Where would they get the opportunity to experience this joy. One wonders what learning is like at Summerhill. What kind of specific intellectual experiences is possible at the school? What kind of equipment does Neill have for the children? In Neill's book is published a report made by his Majesty's Inspectors. They describe Summerhill as a place where the best kind of academic education based on individual interests and non-competitiveness could flourish but doesn't, because the teachers are weak and many of the teaching techniques are old-fashioned and dull. They observed many children who were ready for advance work and the teachers were unprepared to help these students. They claimed that the children at Summerhill had no quiet study room or place where they could go to read or do math and science



problems. The same criticism was levelled against Summerhill by Mary Kohane in a report to the New Republic in May 1969. A former Summerhill student in a correspondence letter to the New Republic complained "she was free to be bored for most of her stay at Summerhill."<sup>16</sup>

Another student Pamela Dunn stated in a letter to the New Republic,

"when I transferred to the house I didn't find my classes interesting. One of my greatest pleasures until I went to Summerhill was arithmetic, but when I had completed the work books in the cottage, I was given no more. Maybe no one noticed or cared."<sup>17</sup>

Learning at Summerhill serves a functional purpose; to enable the child to do the things he wants in life; become an electrician, a doctor or a car salesman. This view of learning negates the possibility that the growing up process might be considerably altered by some forms of knowledge and that learning could conceivably play an active part in growing up. Learning at Summerhill seems to be unstimulating boring, uninteresting and decidedly not valued in the community where clay pottery and creative dramatics are. A value structure is present at Summerhill though Neill does not admit this (as all

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<sup>16</sup>New Republic, June 14, 1969, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

situations must have a value structure whether implicit or explicit, just because they are a specific situation). Neill is naive to assume any situation can really be value free. Neill talks a great deal about tools but never mentions the library, the microscope and the cameras with the same devotion at all. The question arises as to how much learning material is available should a child want to learn. The equipment seems sparse both from Summerhill's own description and Mary Kohane's description after her visit there. Yet contrary to Neill's assumption and as John Holt points out, children gain tremendous satisfaction and feelings of competence which bolsters their ego as they are able to master their environment. They gain a realistic appraisal of themselves which bolsters their ego as they learn what they can and cannot do. It seems Neill overemphasizes the emotional and artistic understanding of reality and denigrates the intellectual understanding of reality. To him consciousness entails a knowledge of ones feelings. Consciousness never takes on a social character and it is never linked with the intellect, the making sense of the world rationally as Marx suggests. One begins to wonder if Neill's school really gives the child a choice between the intellectual experiences and the emotional and creative experiences as its whole structure or nonstructure seems to subtly push the

child in the direction of creative self-exploration and expression.

Summerhill neither creates a positive community nor actively disseminates the knowledge of mankind. Neill's refusal to situate the child is pushed to its ultimately peculiar position when he states,

"To give a child freedom is not easy. It means that we refuse to teach him religion or politics or class consciousness. A child cannot have real freedom when he hears his father thunder against some political group or hears his mother storm against the servant class."<sup>18</sup>

Neill defines freedom in a negative way; noninterference with the growth of the child. It seems that freedom means not situating the child historically religiously, politically; not situating the child in any way. The unlimited possibilities which Neill wishes to leave open to the child seems unrealistic and actually more limiting. Unlimited freedom becomes the same as no freedom, for the child who is free to chose among all political beliefs and has no contact with any will likely remain apolitical or noncommitted in this sphere. Leaving all alternatives open means that the individual has taken no real position and this lack of commitment does not consider the positive side of freedom. When one is not situated one really has no alternatives. A positive position by the parents or

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<sup>18</sup>A. S. Neill, Summerhill, op. cit., p. 111.



the school (be it favorable or unfavorable) ultimately opens up more alternatives to the child and creates a situation where self-definition is possible. Witness the self-definition that became possible for the blacks as they identified with black radical politics and hung pictures of Eldridge Cleaver in the primary cooperative schools of Boston's black ghetto. These Negro children are situated and as he identifies with a particular position more and more alternatives open up. It is this aspect of freedom and committal which comes of being situated, being black and hearing ones parents storm against the whites, being poor and hearing ones neighbors curse the rich being an intellectual and hearing the slanders against eggheads that ultimately defines the individual. It is the consciousness of the conditions in which the individual finds himself that ultimately frees him and opens up alternatives for him.

Summerhill's radical individualism (as it destroys conventional attitudes and feelings) and its underlying concept of freedom (which means noninterference) the child, (an autonomous being operating according to its own laws that should not be interfered with) the school (as a place where the child can live out his own feelings, the psychology which is concerned with the individual psyche and ignores group processes) ultimately places Summerhill within the individualistic liberal tradition. Thus

Summerhill does not offer a radical conception of the child, the school and freedom. It produces a child with the heightened individualism characteristic of the liberal tradition.

The eighteenth century produced a host of literature which characterized the liberal individualistic period of our history and many of these concepts are a part of our twentieth century style even though they are no longer appropriate to a centralized political and economic system.<sup>19</sup> In the liberal democracy the individual and the different spheres of society; economics, politics operate according to their own natural law. In operating for their own benefit and according to their own self-interest, the whole of society would ultimately benefit. It was like a puzzle where all the pieces would fit themselves together. The laws and the political sphere prevented man from interfering with the self-regulating spheres of life, protected each man's freedom from intrusion by another. The liberal concept of freedom as instituted is a negative concept used to protect the individual from intrusion on his private rights. Liberty in this context set up barriers around the individual which no one may pass. The law insured that each man remains within his boundary.

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<sup>19</sup> Karl Mannheim, Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1940).

The political framework upheld the standards of a civil society that was capitalistic and competitive. Within this civil society each man sees the other as the source of his possible demise and his relationship to the other is based on the separation of man from man rather than the association of men. It erected boundries between men as we discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. This organization of society has built into its basic tenets the alienation of man from his fellow men.

Summerhill fits the needs of the child as egoist in the same way that the society in the liberal tradition fits the need of the adult as egoist. The political sphere of the society and the structure of Summerhill operates passively to accommodate and protect the egoistic individual. There is no attempt to structure the environment in such a way that the nature of man (man as egoist) is radically altered, as the kibbutz does.

Summerhill because it remains in the liberal camp, never becomes a real community as its anarchic structure separates the individuals who atomistically function according to their own laws. The signs of alienation which the Summerhill school exhibits is that the children have to keep their doors locked so that the other members of the community won't steal their belongings. The workshop, the arts and crafts room and the theater must be kept under lock and key to prevent the materials from



being destroyed. Pictures are not hung on the dining room walls as students fling their food at them. Mary Kohane in her article in the New Republic asked Neill why the children wear keys around their neck. Neill explained that the children have expensive equipment in their rooms like record players, radios etc. They lock the doors so the little ones won't come in and break the equipment. Then she asked why the little ones wear keys and Neill explained that they kept their snacks locked up so it won't be stolen. In the work room there was a small amount of tools left. Neill counteracted the destruction of tools by encouraging each child to bring his own tool kit and keep it locked. In this way the children were concerned with the tool kits and took good care of them. Neill's solution is individualistic and seems to encourage the separation of children rather than the community of children. Granted the fact that children unlike adults are unconcerned with property, the degree to which the children are destructive of their school property and their friend's property leads one to doubt the existence of strong ties among the students or between the students and the school. Even Neill concedes that there is a degree of unconcern at the school. "At a general meeting Neill says, I felt compelled to launch a vigorous attack

on the seniors for not being antisocial but asocial."<sup>20</sup>

The general meetings which seem to be one of the major communal activities occurs every Saturday night and here the children make the laws that will govern their lives at Summerhill. This is a radical concept for at Summerhill Neill is allowing children from five to sixteen to run their own school as opposed to the traditional school where professional educators determine the school structure. The council however, ultimately becomes an institution that maintains the boundaries between the children as it mainly deals with transgression of the laws. It is primarily a place where the individual takes up a complaint against someone who has violated his or her rights. The misdemeanor is generally atoned for through a fine. The fine is an impersonal way of punishing the child yet it does not really deal with the specifics of the transgression. The group as a whole does not seem to offer or show any positive or concrete ways of handling the problems that arise. Neill handles the real problem children privately in what he calls P.L. or individual discussions. This private solution to problems which are really apart of the group situation increases the separation between students rather than drawing them together. Neill's analysis of the problem child is always in terms

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<sup>20</sup>A. S. Neill, Summerhill, op. cit., p. 53.

of the isolated individual and his psyche. Neill sees most maladies as a repressed wish that continues to live on after it has been denied expression and thus it creates conflict in the individual. This individualistic analysis serves to form a school where individualism and egoism is constantly reinforced and the relationship of the individual to the group, his environment is not sufficiently explored. Mannheim states the shortcomings of this approach when he states,

"Similarly in the individualistic psychology the individual passes of necessity through certain stages of development in the course of which the external physical and social environment have no other function than to release these preformed capacities of the individual."<sup>21</sup>

In this statement Mannheim suggests as I suggest that certainly there can be a more positive tie or relationship among the students and between the students and the school so that isolation of the individual can be replaced by a more creative experience. A more positive relationship would entail that the school does not remain passive in its relationship to the growth of the child. It means the school is a constantly changing institution first shaped by its members who are then shaped by it.

Summerhill is Neill's reaction to twentieth century mass society and it emphasizes a radical form of

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<sup>21</sup>Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, p. 28.



individualism. Summerhill in 1920 foreshadowed the heightened concern for individualism, doing your own thing, freedom in dress, sex and manners that characterizes popular culture in the 1960's. Both these attempts to deal with the anonymity and alienation of the mass society fall within the individualistic liberal tradition. It is individualism in its most extreme form, it is what you have when you take the basic tenets of liberalism and push it to its ultimate position. It is a reaction to a society which offers no real alternatives or else the alternatives it does present are unacceptable. The youth create their own alternatives, in dress, music, sex, and lifestyle. Yet the actual choices these individuals make does not really alter their society and leaves them essentially alienated from this society. The choices themselves are really superfluous, if one has the right to have long hair has any real victory or real control been allowed the individual in their society. The social order makes the real choices for them by creating and shaping the institutions to its own liking e.g., the university, the military, the industrial complex bare little resemblance to what the private citizen wants. The individualism of the eighteenth and nineteenth century offered the man a real choice in the frontier. There he could go and create his own institutions. Thus individualism had validity in the eighteenth century. Individualism in a technocratic

complex society makes little sense. Individualism in a society that is highly centralized only pits one man against a huge organization and the individual remains powerless and alienated. The only alternative seems some sort of group or community existence within which the individual will have power and which can confront or do away with the centralized authority. The group seems to be the only concrete way the individual can further be individuated and achieve his own ends. However intrinsic to the group process and group living is the possibility the individual will be submerged by the group. It is these aspects of overcoming alienation which we will consider when we discuss the kibbutz in the next chapter.

Summerhill as a philosophy of education ultimately implies a philosophy of society that is inadequate as it remains within this liberal tradition which is now in crisis and it leaves the individual alienated from his community or social order, from the rest of mankind and its struggles and victories, its history. Individualism self-respect, love, are all good things but are not enough to overcome the powerlessness of the members in a mass society. Just as the mass because of its anonymity remains powerless, a source of irrationality for they have nowhere to harness their energies the isolated individualist with long or short hair ultimately remains powerless

and alienated from his society. As he cannot exercise real freedom, he remains only partial man.



CHAPTER III:  
THE KIBBUTZ: A COLLECTIVE ATTEMPT TO  
DEAL WITH ALIENATION

Whereas Summerhill attempts to overcome alienation through individuation, the kibbutz attempts to overcome the alienation of modern man through the individual in the group. Bruno Bettelheim in an article in Commentary states,

"Is it possible that the privatization of so much middle class life is not the consequences but rather the cause of so much human isolation which modern man suffers and which the kibbutz way of life has tried to counteract."<sup>1</sup>

The kibbutzim of Israel (of which there are 240 such settlements) is one of the few successful attempts at communal living in a modern technocratic society. Its radically different organization and framework has replaced individual interest with the collective or communal idea and replaced negative freedom with a positive concept of freedom, i.e., that the individuals within a community have the right to shape their own life and that of their children. The kibbutz comes closest to the Marxist ideal

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<sup>1</sup>Bruno Bettelheim, "Does Communal Education Work?" Commentary magazine (New York: American Jewish Committee) Vol. 33, 1962, p. 120.

of any other Western society. The object of the kibbutz is "to put an end to the exploitation of man by man under the capitalist system and the passions and suffering that the system has created."<sup>2</sup> Its solution is the creation of small agricultural communities working on strictly communal principles.

The original founders of the kibbutz came from the ghettos of Europe. They were imaginative innovative men, men of strong convictions and deep concern with social problems. They were men and women who were subjectively alienated from the ghetto life in which they grew up. The ghetto existence had emasculated the individual (their parents) and made them parasites upon an alien and hostile culture. The surrounding society upon which the ghetto depended, humiliated, insulted and dehumanized the members of the ghetto. Their parents position was a precarious one, as they were sealed off from a hostile world and yet they remained dependent upon this world. This ghetto society was injurious to human freedom and dignity. It was a decadent existence full of "needless suffering." Ghetto life brought out the worst attributes of man, his unmanliness, his egoistic pursuits (striving for money and material possessions) his passivity in the hands of a

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world he would not and could not control. The parents attempted to alleviate their alienation by maintaining close ties with their past and with each other. The parents answer to their objective conditions was a passive withdraw which ultimately dehumanized them. The children were subjectively alienated not only from the outside world but from the ghetto world which served to comfort their parents. They felt alone and frustrated as this society made no sense to them. Its cries did not ring true. Their alienation created a consciousness of what this world had done to their parents.

"It was the high degree of individualism among the founding fathers that rendered them so sensitive to the sense of isolation in their own lives. To overcome it for themselves and their children they set out to build a society of great personal freedom that would also be a true folk society of comrades."<sup>3</sup>

Their consciousness of the objective conditions impelled them to act in a manner whereby they could transcend these conditions. Their only escape was to create a new society, elsewhere, where men could be free, live in dignity together with his fellow men. The personal history of these founding fathers was the particularity that shaped the ideological direction of their socialism. The need for freedom was concretized in a household where the

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<sup>3</sup>Bruno Bettelheim, The Children of the Dream (London: Macmillan Company Collier-Macmillan, Ltd, 1969) p. 319.



authoritarian father, the authoritarian religion and the overprotective mother stifled their very being. S. Diamond in his articles in Dissent and in Social problems (Though in my opinion he relies too heavily on the psychological motivations rather than on the objective material conditions which motivated their revolt) suggests that the particular form of socialism that the kibbutz institutionalized was motivated by the personal realities of the ghetto. Thus the institution of communal dining and quick eating habits counteracted the ceremonial and highly emotional mealtime in the ghetto; the overprotective, intense and authoritarian parent-child relationship of the ghetto would be eliminated by communal child rearing; the subservient position of the woman in the ghetto was counteracted by an overemphasis on the equality of woman (to the point where they became manish in their dress.); the religion of their parents was replaced by a socialist creed; the parasitic passivity of the fathers was replaced by an emphasis on manual labor and control over one's institutions. While this analysis sheds light on the particularity of the kibbutz socialism it tends toward reductionism. It loses sight of the social motivations for communal living by concentrating only on the psychological motivations. This deemphasizes the revolutionary spirit that characterized a justified revolt against a hostile environment and loses sight of the broader

significance of this revolt. However it does suggest that the Marxism of the kibbutz is a particularity of Marxism and that its institutions might need reconsidering and revision. The kibbutz is hostile toward this position but we will examine it later on in this paper.

The subjective alienation of the founding fathers led to action in both a Sartrean and a Marxian sense. Within these revolutionaries, both concepts of freedom come closest to being realized. Subjective alienation led to a redefinition of their present conditions, to a revolutionary spirit which understood the objective conditions of their alienation i.e. life in the ghetto and capitalism. It led to a choice and a commitment, it led to the building of a new society based on a new economic framework and on the creation of a new man. Their revolutionary elan brought them close to eliminating alienation and creating man as freedom; man as self-realization and man as creator of his own society.

Their conscious coming together for this one purpose, to build a new society along Marxist lines is what Desan describes Sartre's concept of the group en fusion. It is the union of idealistic youths who sensitively perceive their circumstances and who form a group in order to attain their aims. Without the group they would remain alienated and their condition could not be altered. Thus the importance of the group. However, they consciously



chose to join the group and they are always able to determine the group. They remain individuals within the group as opposed to individuals controlled by the group. The group comes back to direct the individuals when the group becomes institutionalized as it later does in the case of communal child rearing and in the kibbutz as a whole when the kibbutz has matured. Here as we shall later see the nature of the group changes as it becomes rigidified and inertia begins to set in. This is one of the difficulties with group existence. One of the kibbutz students in the high school clearly points out the inertia of the institutionalized group as compared with the activity of their parents group. He criticizes his own group for lack of spontaneity when he writes on the blackboard, "We are activized but not really active."<sup>4</sup> However the founding fathers were consciously active as they received their freedom in the group (through new and intimate relations they formed) and through the group (by the creation of a new society). Through the group they implemented their vision and in the new society released their repressed feelings in a burst of energy and activity which characterized the early kibbutz society. The founders of the kibbutz as revolutionaries were the beginnings of a radically new man though they remained in conflict with their

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<sup>4</sup>George Friedmann, The End of the Jewish People, p. 70.



past. It would be for the next generation to be educated to complete freedom: free from repression, free from inner restraints and free to control and shape the world in which he would live together with his fellow men in a more intimate way.

The next generation was tremendously important to the kibbutz idea for upon this new generation rested the task of perpetuating and enlarging the communal idea. This can easily be seen by the amount of time, money and effort that is extended in the education of the young. Bruno Bettelheim in an article in Commentary explains why the education of the young is so important,

"Behind it was the idea that those who established the kibbutzim had grown up in a decadent society injurious to human freedom and dignity. Nor could any society be regenerated, the kibbutzniks believed except through the regeneration of the individual who in turn was viewed as being largely the product of the education he received."<sup>5</sup>

Two questions remain: 1. To what extent have the revolutionary founders been successful in instituting an educational system and a growing up process that regenerates man and eliminates man's alienation from himself, his society and his fellow men, 2. What exactly happens when their ideas are institutionalized over a long period of

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<sup>5</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, "Does Communal Education Work?" (New York: American Jewish Committee) Vol. 33, 1962, p. 121.

time in an educational process radically different than our own, in communal child rearing.

Several reasons are given as to why the kibbutz chose the institution of communal child rearing. Officially the reasons are: 1. To free the woman from domestic chores which create the inequality of the sexes. 2. To educate the next generation in the ways of the collective life. 3. To free the child so that he is not economically dependent on his parents. 4. To free the child from the detrimental aspect of the parent-child relationship, a neurotic mother or an authoritarian father. However, more central to the evolution of communal child rearing was the desire of the founding fathers to institutionalize the feelings of comradeship, intimacy and freedom which they had achieved through the group and to create radically new man. "The kibbutz fathers were moved by the desire to create a new generation that would be normal, free and unmanly and unsullied by the exile."<sup>6</sup> The founders emphasized the importance of raising a new man and thus when we explore the educational system of the kibbutz we have to examine just how far they succeeded in this endeavor. Many of the founding generation recall their attitude to their parents and hoped that by separating children and parents in tasks and lifestyles appropriate to their ages

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<sup>6</sup>Bruno Bettelheim, Children of a Dream, op. cit., p.17.

the adults would not have to constantly shift their lifestyle to suit the children nor would the children have to do so for the sake of the adults. They would thus salvage all that was good in the parent-child relationship. The children of the kibbutz do, in fact live in a separate society. The children's society is a semiautonomous unit within the larger kibbutz society. From birth till they enter the kibbutz society at about age 19 the children are housed with their peer groups in a different wing of the kibbutz than his parents. A metaplot or nurse runs the children's house where the children sleep eight to a room. The children's peers are the most constant and pervasive force in the child's life. When children are moved from the nursery at six to nine months to the toddler house and from the toddler house to the kindergarden at age six and from the kindergarden to the primary school and from the primary school to the Mosad at age twelve, their peer group remains the same whereas their teacher and nurses change with each move. As a result of the moves the child's relationship with the adult is always tenuous and his relationship with the group (which always remain constant) becomes stronger and stronger. The child's reality is that the peer group which is constantly present will be his greatest source of comfort and security. The baby in the next crib which is watched constantly by the child during his waking hours becomes his constant companion.



If this baby is removed the child suffers separation anxiety similar to that of the middle class child when his parents leave him alone. Since there are a limited number of toys all the children in the group (kvutza) must share these toys. However, sharing in the kvutza is not an isolated instance of generosity or politeness it is a gestalt, an outlook on life. The middle class child is forced to share his toys in specific instances, however, his feelings remain his own, his toys remain his own and his mother remains his own. In the kibbutz nothing belongs exclusively to one child. In this sense private property even as far as the emotions are concerned does not exist. From the earliest years the child shares his affection for his nurse with seven to eight other children. His experiences always occur in the presence of others and these others help him to overcome his personal difficulties or frustrations. He never experiences frustration in isolation nor does he have to even deal with it in isolation. If someone knocks him down and he begins to cry, there is always someone from the group to comfort or distract him. His problems are dealt with externally, through the group and as an adult through manual labor. His solutions are never from within. His happiness as well as his frustration is shared with his group, all that happens to him occurs in their presence. He is bound to the group emotionally and socially and the ties are very strong. He

depends on the group for his self-image and self-respect. There is only one context within which he can define himself. He must be a good chaver and worker, this is the only road open to him and if he fails in terms of the group ideal he is lost. His self-image is constantly reinforced in the same way by the same people from birth till age eighteen. The kibbutz child never experiments with different roles and different lifestyles. His personality must of necessity become rigid. However, within this context the child understands fully the criteria by which will be judged. This eliminates the nameless anxiety so prevalent in the middle class culture where the individual constantly wonders if what he has done is right. However it limits the potentialities for self-realization. Bruno Bettelheim in Children of a Dream quotes one of the members who left the kibbutz,

"He felt that the pervasiveness, though benevolent control of the kibbutz had muted his personality that it had kept him from experiencing not only his own passions but also his own weaknesses because the kibbutz had always protected him from their consequences. It had denied him the right to experience his own grief and his own joys. Since the community decided what his own actions should be in most matters that count..."<sup>7</sup>

By adolescence the controls of the group become stronger and are institutionalized in the democratic government of the Mosad. Here the government contrary to our schools

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 271.

really run the activities, work and discipline of the teenage members of the children's society. Adults function only in advisory capacity. Any deviation from the mores of the children's society and any neglect of duty whether work or academic is immediately brought to the attention of the rest of the group. At meetings which are sometimes daily, under the guidance of the teacher and at times without him the person who "misbehaves" is discussed and judged by the group. Teachers themselves recognize the authority of the group and appeal to the group to pressure the children to comply with his or her demands. The nonauthoritarian position of the teacher and the delegation of authority to group members makes difficult demands on the children and ultimately enhances the power of the group. "By refusing to exercise great personal authority, the teacher not only gives the students too much freedom but it is claimed places too many demands on them."<sup>8</sup> Upon graduation from the mosad the kvutza of eight get together and each member evaluates himself and the others of the kvutza as to their worthiness to become a chaver. Thus the child is evaluated as Bettelheim states "Importance and uniqueness they feel do not rest on who a person is, but on what he does for the community

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<sup>8</sup>Melford Spiro, Children of the Kibbutz, op. cit., p. 314.



in general through his particular work assignments."<sup>9</sup> The standards of evaluation of the individual rids the kibbutz society of movie star worship, glamour, social class etc. It puts evaluation on a firmer and fairer plane. However, inherent in this criteria is the possibility that the individual becomes identical with his contribution and thus he becomes a thing in the eyes of his comrades. This is what the kibbutz must guard against for this as Buber suggests, when man in the collective is only a partial man and it is the whole man that the founding fathers were concerned with creating.

The group when institutionalized in communal child rearing is the internalization and carrier of kibbutz values. In its very being it is the kibbutz. The group is the child's life as he exists only within the group, only as a member of the group. As he has no real life apart from the group, he is always cautious about jeopardizing his position in the group for this might ultimately mean jeopardizing himself or leaving the kibbutz (which is really a drastic alternative). If he should lose the acceptance of the group he has nowhere to turn. In our middle class environment the child can turn to his parents or a different group. This is not possible in the

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<sup>9</sup>Bruno Bettelheim, Children of a Dream, op. cit., p. 101.

kibbutz. Spirro, Rabbin and Bettelheim show that what always stops the adolescent, puts him in his place even more than adult opposition is group pressure, first in the form of the peer group and secondly in the form of the kibbutz (the secondary group to which he belongs) in the form of some adult. "Their giving in starts as soon as they feel a fervor that group opinion leans the other way."<sup>10</sup> The individual cannot conceive of standing alone against the group. The group in the kibbutz is a defined group, defined in terms of members and in terms of goals. This is different than the anonymous group in our society which gives rise to the other directed personality that David Riesman so aptly describes. Here he is directed by an anonymous other, external to himself for unidentifiable goals. He is motivated by a fear of being unlike the totality and therefore being alone. He however, ultimately remains alone even when he behaves like the totality for there is no group feeling in the seriality of the totality. His fears do not correspond to the objective conditions of reality where the totality and the other which he is trying to be like is no one other than himself. In the kibbutz the child is directed by other which he is apart of for a specific goal which is his goal. He

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<sup>10</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, The Children of a Dream, op. cit., p. 213.

is part of the superego which he helps create and as Bettelheim points out his ego is a collective ego. He derives his strength from the group and from the specific role he has in the group. However, "If one's ego is essentially a group ego then to set one's private ego against the group ego is a shattering experience and the personal ego feels to weak when its strongest aspect the group ego gets lost."<sup>11</sup>

The group is viewed by most writers on the kibbutz, as the subordination of the individual to the group. However given the concept of the collective ego and a collective superego as opposed to the liberal tradition of the Individual ego, Bettelheim more accurate in describing group living as a coordination of needs. It is this coordination of needs that prepares the individual for cooperative living with other adults. It is only because communal living has changed the nature of the ego and the superego that cooperation becomes a really authentic experience.

The coordination of needs means that the children of the society are collectively reared and nurtured in such a manner that when committing an act they ultimately think in terms of the collective, i.e. will their act benefit or harm the whole? With the perpetration of acts for the

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 262.



whole their ego becomes enhanced. Their concern with the whole is not necessarily do to a fear of what others will say (though this is often a motive because of the nature of the group) but because they are the kibbutz and the action they perpetrate directly affects their lives. If they commit an act destructive of the kibbutz, or one which does not take the whole into consideration but promotes the special interest of a few at the expense of many their superego will be harsh on them as it always identifies with the whole. In this sense Bettelheim claims the kibbutz sabre is a radical new man. Each individual is ethically concerned with the preservation of their community which they are a significant part of and which nurtures and sustains them in a manner they have chosen. Thus the kibbutz demands the coordination of needs, a conscious thinking of the whole as opposed to the liberal society which promotes a conscious thinking in terms of self-interest in the belief that the needs of the whole will thus be taken care of and which has not been the case. It is this egoistic pursuit which is the basis of organization in the liberal society that distinguishes it from the kibbutz or the collective Marxist ideal.

In perceiving the common good there is no longer a subordination of needs but rather a coordination of needs. This means that ultimately the interests of the whole determines the actions of the individual and thus the

betterment of society will mean the betterment of the individual's life for he is the society.

The coordination of needs can be more easily understood when we think of the ideal family. Here there is clearly no subordination of needs but rather the coordination of needs where the individuals of the family cooperate in order to preserve the family which they have chosen as their way of life and which in turn nurtures and sustains its members.

To the extent the children's needs are coordinated with those that will maintain the kibbutz as it has set itself up to be maintained, we will term this the coordination of needs. In this case the individuals of the group constitute a group only because they accept the whole and therefore it is they who must determine the needs and direction of the whole. When the needs and direction of the whole is determined not by the actual group itself but by all that is external to the group; the parents or the ideology, a subordination of needs is generally involved. In this instance the individual must give up his feelings and transfer ownership of himself to the ideology of the kibbutz. Though he originally created these ideas he no longer judges or creates new ideas to fit changing situations but old ideas and thought patterns (which are no longer applicable) come back to determine him. This is particularly evident in the prison song

incident which Bruno Bettelheim describes. A group of adolescence had written a play in which there was a song that compared mosad (the high school) life to a prison. The adults felt this was inappropriate and bad for the kibbutz image. Through long discussions with the group the students began to claim that they didn't really believe what they wrote in the song for it was just a joke and they agreed not to perform it.<sup>12</sup> This however was not enough. They had to discuss the issue until they not only agreed not to perform it but that the song was entirely untrue and that the feelings the song expressed was false. It is this externally controlled group situation which constitutes a subordination of needs and alienates the child from himself. These make it difficult for the child to understand what he feels and what he is about. This in turn makes it difficult to establish intimate relations within the group. Even though communal child rearing creates what Bettelheim terms a communal superego the nature of the group in the kibbutz and the rigid demands it makes leaves the kibbutz born with the same problem as the middle class American; the inability to achieve intimacy within the group he believes in and lives with.

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<sup>12</sup>Bruno Bettelheim, Children of a Dream, op, cit., p. 215.



In an intimate relationship the individual must be free to vent his anger, fear and disappointments without it having bad effects, without the threat of banishment. However the kibbutz child is not in such a position, as Bettelheim states, "The kibbutz child depends far too much on the peer group. He cannot afford to scream at them, to fight with them, knowing that if things get too rough he can always return to the womb of the family, to the safety of his home."<sup>13</sup> The strict codes of the group and the rigidity of the group creates a problem for the individual in the group. The safest way for the individual is to repress his feelings. As he continually must repress his feelings or keep them under control he begins to not know his feelings any longer, he loses knowledge about himself and becomes estranged from himself. The kibbutz determines his response. To be intimate with another the individual reveals to the other his feeling, his discomfort, his anger, and he knows the other will meet them with empathy and not with dislike or indifference. However the individuals of the kibbutz are unaware of themselves they do not know how they feel or why they feel the way they do. Hence the individual cannot expose that which he does not recognize as existing within himself and thus he does

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<sup>13</sup>Bruno Bettelheim, Children of a Dream, op.cit., p. 244.

not establish intimate relationships. There is an inherent contradiction within the kibbutz idea for the kibbutz began with the idea of communal child rearing in order to create more intimate relations between men but it results in a sabra unable to form these types of relationships. Bruno Bettelheim states, "Most of all while the kibbutz was designed to enable men to be intimate with others it disregards the fact that this is not possible without knowing oneself."<sup>14</sup> Some kibbutz sabra's had their first encounter with themselves, their first private experience in battle when they were alone face to face with death. One sabra relates the intensity of this experience,

"It forced us to think. Types like us don't really know how to ruminate about problems of good and bad, justice and injustice, about what is permissible and what is forbidden. Within the framework of our way of life, we are generally not the type of people who go into depth in matters of soul-searching. For a person who doesn't have an inner world of his own who cannot work things through with himself the group of us now have some contact with our feelings, are asking whether things are right or wrong, all as a result of the battles. It's a pity we achieved this only through the war experience but it's good that it motivates us to do a bit of soul-searching."<sup>15</sup>

It took an extreme "personal" experience to make the sabra aware of his feelings and to allow him to have a more intimate and binding relationship with his comrades

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

as he was now able to share these feelings with them. Now, for the first time, the sabra became aware of how estranged he had been from himself even though he had previously, believed himself happy. The war experience made the sabra question his upbringing and all he had previously accepted. For the first time he began to critically evaluate the kibbutz experience and he was now beginning to experience his own attitudes rather than accept those of the kibbutz. The happy sabra alienated from himself seems in this respect very similar to the happy suburbanite discussed in the first chapter, the suburbanite who was objectively alienated.

The difficulty in establishing intimate relations is also related to the fact that the sabra never had the experience of intimacy in early childhood. Where the founders experienced intense and intimate relationships in the Ghetto family the sabra's relationship to his parent does not involve this kind of intimacy. The parent in the kibbutz, is an important part of the child's growing up, however, he is third in importance to the peer group which ranks first and the kibbutz which ranks second. The relationship between child and parents is mediated by an abstract institution. The kibbutz determines the role of the parent and child in the relationship. The kibbutz controlled the time of day and the different ways the parent could carry out his role. Stanley Diamond in an



article in Social Problems states,

"The concrete relations between the generations were abstracted, an institution was interposed between the parent and child.... Society had become the direct socializing agency, the collective idea had triumphed over the concrete person."<sup>16</sup>

It is this experience which is alienating, for, the individuals of the relationship do not determine the nature of the relationship. They have transferred control to the kibbutz which determines the relationship between parent and child. Within the parent-child relationship the parent always upholds the position of the metaplet of the peer group when and if the child complains against them. The parent seldom protects the child against these outside forces. The child is seldom given the belief that he is right. He therefore gives up his struggle to assert himself. One parent openly states this dilemma when she says, "I was too much conscious of my duties as a kibbutz mother. I always went by what parents are supposed to be like."<sup>17</sup> The parent, the peer group, and the metaplet represent the kibbutz in a united front. Bruno Bettelheim describes a specific incident which clearly shows this,

"As the pleading went on and as her brother's personal desires were met only by general

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<sup>16</sup> Stanley Diamond, "Kibbutz and Shtetle: The History of an Idea," Social Problems, Vol. 5, No. 2, Fall, 1957, p. 89.

<sup>17</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, Children of a Dream, op. cit. p. 182.

statements about the rules of community life, the two children became more and more disappointed at the failure to get a personal reaction and hence the effectiveness of close personal relations."<sup>18</sup>

Often the parent could not help the child out when the child needed him most. He was either not permitted to be with the child at that time of day or else his position as parent demanded he uphold the kibbutz as against the child's grievances. If, for example, the child should be afraid of the dark and demand that his parents remain with him for part of the evening the parent would not. The child was left with his peers to cope with distressing situations. It is also difficult for the child to establish intimate relations with the parents because the relationship is confined to a specific two hours each day. This time is made as pleasant as possible for the children. All complex emotions and negative feelings are held in check during these hours. However, as Bettelheim points out the child is naturally filled with ambivalent feelings and if these are kept out of the relationship, the relationship tends to become emotionally shallow and lacks intimacy. The relegation of the relationship to a special time tends to determine the nature of the interaction. It leaves neither parent nor child free to reveal themselves

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<sup>18</sup>Bruno Bettelheim, Children of a Dream, op. cit., p. 186.

before each other. The importance of the parent shrinks as he plays and gives love to his children but is not there to provide the essentials of daily living or to cater to the emotional needs of the child in times of stress.

"Emotionalities and fun are relegated to a few hours a day. But because security is a more basic pleasure greater emotional closeness and freedom, while nice, emerge as not really very important and what has vaster implications they are radically separated from the rest of one's life. The result is the feeling that they are really unimportant and not intrinsically connected with the more meaningful process of living."<sup>19</sup>

The separation of physical and emotional care, of fun hours and work hours from the rest of one's life tends to weaken the ties between parent and child rather than strengthen them as the kibbutz parents had thought it would.

As a result this cooperative community specifically designed to change the nature of man and the relationships between men has encountered unexpected difficulties. It has created a cooperative and collective individual free of many middle class neuroses, juvenile delinquency, dope addiction and homosexuality. The individual of the kibbutz however, remains alone and unable to form truly intimate relations as his parents had done. This

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<sup>19</sup>Bruno Bettelheim, Children of a Dream, op. cit., p. 194.



observation was agreed upon by all authors including this author who realized this on her visit to the kibbutz. As Stanley Diamond so aptly states,

"This forced interaction inevitably gives the group its mechanical character. The affective ties beneath the sabra are underdeveloped, consequently beneath the collective surface the sabra emerges as an isolated man and this is the cardinal paradox in collective rearing."<sup>20</sup>

Spiro describes the sabra as follows,

"The sabra not only avoids deep emotional relationships with a few, but they maintain an attitude of psychological distance with the many. In general, all their relationships are, as the kibbutz puts it sequeirium or guarded (closed). They seem to be enveloped within a shell from which their psyches rarely protrude and which prevents others from penetrating beyond the surface."<sup>21</sup>

The individuation and intimacy which the group provided for the parents, the parents hoped to provide for their children. However, whenever individuation and collectivism were in conflict the collective principle won out. Paradoxly, that which the kibbutz gave to the parents was directly opposite of what the kibbutz meant to the children.

The lack of intimacy with oneself and ones fellow men made it difficult for the kibbutz born to feel empathy

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<sup>20</sup> Stanley Diamond, "Kibbutz and Shtettle: The History of an Idea," op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>21</sup> Melford Spiro, The Children of the Kibbutz, op. cit., p. 424.

with his comrades; for to have empathy implies one understands ones own feelings and can therefore put oneself in anothers place and feel what the other is feeling. This was part of the original hope of the founding fathers. They saw the height of emotional experience in the kibbutz as feeling with others. The sabra, though he exhibits a strong concern for the members of the kibbutz, this rather than being empathy, is a familiar feeling, a feeling of concern for that which one is part of. He does not feel what others feel, nor does he understand the feelings of others nor is he able to theoretically play with a problem which would entail his putting himself in someone elses place. Therefore, his views tend to become easily rigidified and he has little concern or feeling for the predicaments of members outside his group. In most cases the kibbutz sabra is downright hostile and prejudiced against those who think or look differently or who do not wholeheartedly embrace his kind of life. This is apparent in Melford Spiro's description of how the sabra treated the immigrant African Jews, the city students and the children from the neighboring kibbutz that attended the mosad (high school). The sabras were hostile to the orientals and refused to really allow them to participate in the activities of the mosad. The orientals refused to live with the kibbutz children because of their aggression and they threatened to leave the mosad if integration were pushed.

In a mosad newspaper article the orientals claimed "We do not feel part of the school. The other children laugh at us do not accept us as friends or comrades we feel lonely and lost." The sabras on the other hand say, "Things were good in this country until the schorim (means black ones) came."<sup>22</sup> The sabra's hostility was not only confined to recent immigrants, Spiro describes several instances where the boy of Keryat Yeddidim, physically beat the girls from the neighboring kibbutz (these children attended the mosad at Keryat Yeddidim). The children that attended the high school from the city were treated with indifference. There is little attempt on the part of the sabra to explore the ideas of the people from the different areas; instead they shut them out. One of the teachers said that after two years in the ultra permissive atmosphere of the mosad he still did not know his students as well as he did those in a public high school in New York. The sabra does not know himself and he has transferred ownership of himself to the kibbutz which through its ideology and institutions has come back to determine his relationship to the group, to the parents and to the collective. The kibbutz often proscribes and dictates behavior and attitudes in too many areas; in areas where the immediate group or the

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<sup>22</sup>Melford Spiro, Children of the Kibbutz, op. cit., p. 102.



individual should be in control. A while back several parents desired that their infants sleep in their room at night. The kibbutz objected on the grounds that this would destroy the nature of collective life. The notion of the outward forms of a particular conception of Marxism often replaces the intrinsic goals of Marxism. The "collective idea" and its institutions have become reified and rigidified. These outward forms rather than being controlled and changed by its new members comes back to determine the existence of the members. Thus the kibbutz has become a static society, for it is thought that any change in the form of the institutions is a potential threat to the kibbutz idea. Basic change is not considered, even though a changing society and changing members might demand a reevaluation of the basic institutions. All change is seen as a betrayal of the original idea. "It resists change, worries about innovations rather than rising to the challenge of the new with alacrity. Behind this is no lack of concern or sensitivity, but a fear of what it might do to the integrity of the kibbutz idea."<sup>23</sup> This resistance to change became evident when the newly arrived North African Jews needed a place to live. The kibbutz members attempted to help assimilate these Jews

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<sup>23</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, Children of a Dream, op. cit., p. 286.

but their effort was minimal. They feared the African could not adapt to kibbutz life and would present a threat to the collective. "They act in self-protection and the self-protection by drawing them inward has become more alluring than to meet crisis with daring new solutions."<sup>24</sup> When the original conception of collective life becomes reified, change becomes increasingly difficult. The original ideas are still being pursued as ends in themselves, though they often do not explain or fit the changing kibbutz reality. Chevayon or equality is such an example. As it is pushed to its absurd conclusion, trivial indulgences of personal taste become an expression of egoism and therefore not permissible. However Marx's original meaning of equality simply meant the abolition of all classes. The Vatikim (founding fathers) "as supreme idealists in the philosophic sense tended to reify their ideas and pursue them as ends in themselves." The sabra on the other hand is a "mechanical idealist whose repetition of the classic kibbutz formula bears little relation to his inner life."<sup>25</sup> The sabra's relationship to politics the party does not stem from deep commitment or emotional involvement but a mechanical sense of duty. The

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>25</sup>Stanley Diamond, "Kibbutz and Shtettle: The History of an Idea," *op. cit.*, p. 94.

whole concept of the collective child rearing and community is also pursued as an end in itself. The collective has come to demand the constant interaction of the members whether they so desire this or not. The enforced daily interaction seems to cause many members discomfort and feelings of being closed in with nowhere to escape the watching eye of the kibbutz. Spiro describes the tension that arises when one is watched constantly and one is forced to interact during most of one's waking hours. He points out that much fighting and arguing is due to a lack of privacy and the persistent pressure of the chaverim. Diamond in his article in Dissent points out,

"Some chaverim observed it is entirely possible to cooperate with other people even when one does not love them, but unless one loves them it is all but impossible to be in constant interaction with them. And it is this impossibility which the kibbutz in effect imposes on its members by its values of group dynamics and its consequent institution of communal living."<sup>26</sup>

As a result of this hectic group life; the constant round of activities in the mosad, the constant interaction with the same group while eating and working the young adult sabra spends more time alone than his parents did. The adult sabra derives pleasure from spending a good deal of his evenings in his room reading and listening to records. He participates far less than his parents did in

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<sup>26</sup> Stanley Diamond, "Utopia in Crisis," Dissent (Spring, 1957) p. 139.



the general meetings and the group discussions and seldom is there dancing into the night the way the original group had done. "This relative disinterest in group participation is explained by the sabra as a reaction to and a retreat from their past."<sup>27</sup> In the kibbutz you have a situation where communal living has become an end in itself and is inconsistent with the needs of the community. The members of the kibbutz seem to have lost sight of their original experiment in cooperative socialism. The kibbutz was originally to be an experiment that explores cooperative life and creative self-realization. However, it has lost sight of the fact that only through this experimentation can its goals be realized. As it presently exists it had lost its experimental quality and has begun to take on more and more the characteristics of a "collective bourgeoisie." It has transformed many of the values of the bourgeoisie, more material wealth, progress, a bigger and better society into the values of the collective. The kibbutz is beginning to think in terms of a bigger and better society, more new homes, a bigger communal dining hall, a swimming pool etc. The idealism of the founders, the desire to improve the quality of life for the individuals is dwindling as the exigencies of

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<sup>27</sup>Melford Spiro, Children of the Kibbutz, op. cit., p. 38.

early kibbutz life have disappeared. The kibbutz (collectively) can be likened unto the capitalist as it demands more work from its members in order to create a bigger and better society. In Marxism, however, the means of production are controlled so that man need no longer spend his life trying to satisfy basic wants and thereby he can pursue the work through which he will realize himself. In his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts Marx envisions a man experimenting with his work, hunting in the morning, creating in the afternoon etc. However, this is not the case in the modern kibbutz. Stanley Diamond calls the kibbutz a "Collective business in a capitalist environment."<sup>28</sup> In the kibbutz diary of 1923 one chaver complains about the character of kibbutz life "Agricultural and economic considerations outweigh the importance of the original goal the spiritual redemption of each of us through continuous education and material influence."<sup>29</sup> J. E. Friedmann also questions the radicalism of the kibbutz when he states, "But are comfort and material property to be the principle criteria?"<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Stanley Diamond, "Kibbutz and Shtetle: The History of an Idea," op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>30</sup> J. E. Friedmann, End of the Jewish People, op. cit., p. 22.

Marx contended that "Communism was to be the necessary form and the active principle of the immediate future, but Communism is not itself the aim of human development or the final form of human society."<sup>31</sup> The collectivization of the means of production is the minimum necessary for the creation of a new and just society which will end the alienation of men from themselves, each other and their society. From this point on it is up to the members of society to control and create the institutions necessary for human development and self-realization. As the kibbutz dogmatically sticks to the original particularities of socialism and refuses to experiment with the collective idea it cannot attain the Marxist goal. Because the kibbutz has stopped experimenting, its institutions have become reified and the society has become static and the ideology rather than the members of the kibbutz determine the nature of the institutions. The original conditions which make the kibbutz a necessity in Israel no longer exist. As a result, the kibbutz, in order to define itself, maintain its identity and keep itself from being swallowed up by the surrounding capitalist society finds it necessary to strictly adhere to the "kibbutz idea." One wonders just how much rigidity, defensiveness,

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<sup>31</sup>Fritz Pappenhiem, The Alienation of Modern Man (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1959) p. 116.



reliance on abstract ideology, refusal to change is due to the fact that the kibbutz is a Marxist community within a larger capitalistic context.

Though we have shown that the individual in the kibbutz has become alienated from himself, that is has lost contact with his emotional and sensual self the kibbutz adolescent does not exhibit the signs of alienation from his society that characterizes the adolescent in our society. There is no delinquency, homosexuality, drug addiction in the kibbutz. On the contrary the kibbutz child strongly identifies with the society into which he will grow up and he strongly desires to become a part of that society. The existential vacume that presents itself to the child in our society, raises such questions as: who am I? what is my role? what is the meaning of life? are never raised in the kibbutz. None of the problems that Goodman describes in Growing Up Absurd exist for the kibbutz adolescent. In part this is due to the smallness and wholistic nature of kibbutz life and to the uniformity of a basically agricultural community. These existential questions are answered for the child by the organization and structure of his community. I. A. Rabin explains this when he states, "Collective striving and group action give a sense of belongingness. The very structure of the kibbutz society does not permit the isolation of the individual and the existential vacume

to become a major phenomena."<sup>32</sup> In an attitude test administered by Spiro, the answer to the question "what is your life ambition"? nineteen out of twenty-seven to: 1. work in Kiryat Yedidim; 2. to be a member of Kiryat Yedidim; 3. to improve Kiryat Yedidim.<sup>33</sup> Fritz Pappenhiem shows that in a survey taken in 1955 most people in the United States were concerned about their personal health or family problems and only eight percent were concerned with world problems even though there is a threat of war.<sup>34</sup> In the kibbutz Rabin did a similar study and found the kibbutz born were concerned with changing the present world situation and creating a better world to live in. Their worries included death and injury or harm to others. The kibbutz children's society produces a young adult that strongly identifies and believes in the society into which he will grow up. Shmuel Golan, a kibbutz educator and psychiatrist sums up what appears to be the difference between a Summerhillian approach and a kibbutz approach when he states,

"In the middle class people are trained to seek solutions for themselves within their restricted

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<sup>32</sup>I. A. Rabin, Growing Up in the Kibbutz (New York: Spunger Publishing Company, 1965), p. 212.

<sup>33</sup>Melford Spiro, Children of the Kibbutz, op. cit., pp. 360-62.

<sup>34</sup>Fritz Pappenhiem, The Alienation of Modern Man, op. cit.

circle and to ignore as much as possible the problems of others. The millieu of collective education on the other hand is a society which strives for the simultaneous solution of social economic and cultural problems on the basis of cooperation, equality and mutual aid."<sup>35</sup>

The schools create and reinforce the child's belief in the society into which he will grow up. In the kibbutz as opposed to our society the child is never a part of the anonymous mass which forces him to define himself in order to be rid of his anonymity. In the kibbutz the child is known to all the members and workers of the kibbutz. He is therefore safe from the anonymity which adolescence and young adults find so threatening in our society. Thus the emphasis which we and Summerhill place on uniqueness, individuality does not have the same functional necessity in the kibbutz society. "Each of them is safe from anonymity because he is well known to all who count in his human surrounding."<sup>36</sup> In addition "he shares the individuality of the kibbutz, with which he is deeply identified to a degree unknown and impossible in modern mass society."<sup>37</sup> An interesting result of all this is that

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<sup>35</sup> Shmuel Golan, "Collective Education in the Kibbutz," *Psychiatry* 1959 (Washington: William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation).

<sup>36</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, "Does Communal Education Work?" *Commentary* (New York: American Jewish Committee) Vol. 33, 1962, p. 123.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 123.



because the kibbutz adolescent accepts the adult world and is not in rebellion against this world character traits which he exhibits and are considered problem traits in our society are not so considered in the kibbutz.

Discipline in the kibbutz school, is much freer than American schools. The kibbutz children walk in and out of the room whenever they please, they talk back to the teachers and are generally noisy during the lesson, when they are not particularly interested they simply get up and walk around the room. Their dress is sloppy and often consists of shorts in class. While sloppy dress and lack of respect for authority are considered grave problems in our society (witness the many articles on adolescent dress, law and order etc.) this is not a "problem" within the kibbutz schools. It is my contention that the rebellion of the youth, their challenge to middle class values, demand answers that the parents cannot give and therefore they constitute a threat to the accepted pattern of living. This threat ultimately determines what the society will deem an "adolescent problem." In the kibbutz the children accept their parents heroic role in the founding of the kibbutz and they accept the values of the kibbutz. Thus those traits that are similar to adolescents in our culture are not a problem in the kibbutz culture. The fact that these adolescents are not threatening their parents ways, proves that the kibbutz child is not alienated.

from the adult world in which he must eventually live.

What are the characteristics of the children's society and particularly the school which fosters the positive relationship between the child and the society? For one thing the children of the kibbutz control and run their society within the context of the larger kibbutz society. This society is a smaller though complete replica of the larger kibbutz society. The children's society includes a complex of rooms in which the children eat, sleep and attend classes. All of this is in the same building. It also includes a children's farm with a vegetable garden and some sheep, goats and poultry. The children themselves tend this farm dividing up the work among them; the youngest working a half hour daily, the oldest in the mosad putting in  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours daily. The children are fully responsible for the maintenance of their farm and the income received as a result of their labor is their own. This money is used by the kvutza to purchase whatever they wish. These activities are not busy work or something dreamt up by an adult in order to improve the character of the youth as is often the case with some progressive schools in the states. These activities are relevant as they are part of the nature of the kibbutz way of life and the parents are occupied with the same activities in their daily lives. The children are also responsible for the maintenance of their rooms. They make their beds, serve

the food, clean their rooms, work in the laundry and the garden. These activities are not chores done at parental request nor are they done in the parents house, as is the case in our middle class society. These jobs are done in order for the children to maintain their own society and herein lies the essential difference. "In doing them the children are not someone's little helper nor are they being interrupted from important activities they would rather engage in they are going about the business of their very own lives."<sup>38</sup> The children in conjunction with the teacher run and regulate the children's society through a representative student government that plans activities, distributes chores and disciplines errant members. Here childhood is a serious matter and the child unlike the middle class child is convinced his way of life has as much validity and importance as the other age groups including the adolescent and the adult. This feeling of being self-contained, free from the demands of an adult world that gives their value structure legitimacy. Our middle class parents take their children's activities to be less important and serious than their own and there is a constant push by the parent to have the child grow up and become adult like. The child sees little validity in

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<sup>38</sup>Bruno Bettelhiem, Children of a Dream, op. cit., p. 162.



his way of life. Within the kibbutz the child's active engagement in an actual society gives the child a sense of belonging and replaces the alienation that middle class children must feel in a society and school run by adults, who tell them what to do, what they must achieve and what they must learn. Ultimately the kibbutz child is his own society and therefore he need not rebel as he is not alienated from that society and there is no one who directs his life.

The children's society is an integral part of the whole kibbutz value structure. The relationship between the children's society and the larger complex is made apparent to the children as they take their daily hikes around the kibbutz. These hikes have an important socializing function. As part of their hike the children investigate the economic activities of the kibbutz. In the dairy they watch their friend's parents milk the cow, they are permitted to help in feeding the animals. The child can watch the production process from beginning to end and follow most of what is involved. The work of the adult is interrupted to explain it to the children. Thus in Children of a Dream Bettelheim states, "virtually all spheres of adult life are not only within the child's grasp from quite an early age he spends part of his day on exactly

the same activities adults perform."<sup>39</sup> By adolescence the youngsters no longer take hikes in the kibbutz communities but serve a limited apprenticeship in various branches of the kibbutz economy. This helps them to understand the different parts of the economy which they will operate as young adults. The feeling of understanding, experiencing and being able to define the adult world gives the kibbutz child great security and belief but most importantly there are no occupations that seem devoid of value, nor does the society ever appear meaningless in the same way our society does to the growing child. As a result of all this, the kibbutz child understands how and where all his needs are satisfied by the kibbutz. At seven the kibbutz child can begin to understand the nature of community and society why they exist and what benefits he derives from its existence. His parents has a positive role in this process which he in turn can watch. This creates a positive attitude toward his community. The society makes sense as he realizes why and for what it exists, as he identifies with it. In our society there seems no apparent connection between the food and clothes on the table and the surrounding society. The concept of society remains vague and anonymous as all our wants are met at the corner supermarket. Most often the father's work

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<sup>39</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, Children of a Dream, p. 163.

seems unclear or unrelated to anything significant and it becomes harder for the child to maintain any relationships with his society. There seems to be little connection between society and how our needs are filled. Hence, there is little connection between us and our society.

The kibbutz as a cooperative endeavor elicits the children's positive attitude by watching the individuals cooperate and work toward a goal which is concretized in the physical form and organization of the kibbutz. Work is a value introduced early into the sabra's life as a means of self-definition and a positive bond between him and his society. Thus not only does he watch others work and he works in his own society but as early as nursery school the term work is applied to his art and clay work in order to differentiate work from other activities and in order to promote the value of work. The cooperative endeavor of the kibbutz leaves the child feeling that he is needed to carry on the kibbutz idea. In our society the competitiveness pits each man alone against huge bureaucracy and each individual feels totally expendable to the system, he feels alienated from the system.

The classroom situation is but a small part of the total educational process. The teachers at the kibbutz are supervisors or guides in the classroom and counselors and often the conscience of the group. The classrooms seem totally chaotic as compared with American classrooms,



as only a handful pay attention at any one time while the others argue with each other, walk around the room draw at their seats etc. Most of the time there seems as if little is happening, however, their knowledge covers a wide range of categories but focuses mostly on Marxism and literature. The project method (this was quite popular in the progressive era) is used throughout the school system. Here the students decide upon a subject or a particular time span they wish to study. Each student determines what aspect of the basic subject area he wishes to explore and his explorations become part of the entire group effort. Thus in a study of light one child makes a movie, another writes a physics report, another designs an experiment or a telescope and another writes a poem. Each project is a cooperative or group endeavor where the individual defining his own work in terms of a common project they have all decided upon. The basic structure of the project method reflects the structure of and organization of the adult kibbutz society. There are no specific assignments as the work is voluntary and there are no grades given for the work done. Competition in all forms is shunned. Those students who are competitive or who are always at the top of the group are disliked by the group. The effect of this attitude is to widen the middle range of achievement and to narrow the range of very bright or very slow students. The levelling effect of the kibbutz

educational system tends to make students with exceptional talents reticent about these talents and generally prevents students from pursuing such talents as dancing or art. Any area of study whose sole function is creative expression, is denegated because it cannot effectively contribute to the kibbutz economy and the kibbutz ultimately needs all its manpower. There is however, very little pressure on the child to "succeed." Learning is valued for its intrinsic merits, as it serves the student in no other way except self-fulfillment. Eventually all children will become a member of the kibbutz and "each one will fare no better or no worse than any other kibbutznick, whatever his manner, scholastic standing or behavior in any other realm."<sup>40</sup> The sole reason for studying in school is to learn and knowing or learning is not a means to an end as in our society. However, as the child is unable to understand his feelings and as the child lacks intimacy with himself he is unable to bridge the gap between the knower and the object to be known. He is unable to know in the socratic sense of knowing. In other words he does not become one with his knowledge and the knowledge does not serve to reveal himself to himself or to reveal truth (something which the sabra is not searching for as he assumes he already has it.). Thus in one

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<sup>40</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, Children of a Dream, p. 154.



sense he remains alienated from his knowledge.

Tamara a young ten year old kibbutz girl vividly describes her feelings about kibbutz education after a visit to New York. Spiro states

"She felt children read and studied only for the teacher. They are not interested she said in reading for its own sake but in order to please the teacher and to get a good grade. Children were selfish and would not share with others....  
...The teachers are not like kibbutz teachers. They do not permit the children to talk in class, but compel them to sit in a corner or leave the room."<sup>41</sup>

The atmosphere of the kibbutz school is free non-pressuring, permissive and inquisitive. However, the school itself has little effect in the development of the child. Ultimately it is the repressive nature of the group as institutionalized in collective child rearing that molds a sabra who is alienated from his sensual and emotional self and from his comrades. As the group is institutionalized in the kibbutz the collective always comes between man and himself and man and his fellowmen. The communal life represents an attempt to go beyond the alienation characteristic of man within the liberalistic tradition the alienation which characterizes Niell's Summerhill. The group or collective represents a concrete way to combat a centralized social system. The

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<sup>41</sup>Melford Spiro, Children of the Kibbutz, op. cit., p. 363.



collectivism of the kibbutz draws man toward his community however, it is as Martin Buber states, "Collectivisim only understands man as part." It is the nature of the group and the nature of the community that must be further investigated so as to prevent the reification of the institutions and the alienation of the individual.

The studies of Summerhill and the kibbutz do offer concrete suggestions or possibilities for our schools. It suggests that the educational institutions must be directed and controlled by the individuals who make up the institutions the students, the teachers, the parents. That the child must be free from the traditional pressures and curriculum so as to pursue that which will make him more acquainted with himself and the human traditions from which he evolved. That perhaps the school evolve as a real communal institution functioning eighteen hours a day as a classroom, a after school center, a night center. Perhaps there could be a closer tie between the school and the community, whereby the children explore the community realistically and serve an apprenticeship in political and economic spheres of the community. Perhaps the school might in some communities be an actual children's society where the children room and board from age five till sixteen a few blocks from their parents homes. All these suggest alternatives to our present conception of education as well as suggestions for the revision of the present

social and economic structure of our society. Both schools deserve serious attention as to their merits as well as the problems they raise, as they attempt to combat alienation and create man as freedom.

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